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The Hand of Ethelberta.

CHAPTER X.

A LADY'S DRAWING-ROOMS—ETHELBERTA'S DRESSING-ROOM.



T was a house in a street on the north side of Hyde Park, between ten and eleven in the evening, and several intelligent and courteous people had assembled there to enjoy themselves as far as it was possible to do so in a neutral way—all carefully preserving an aspect that they did not consider themselves clever or talented in the least degree, and keeping every variety of feeling in a state of solution, in spite of any attempts such feelings made from time to time to crystallize on interesting subjects in hand.

“Neigh, who is that charming woman with her head built up in a novel way even for hair architecture—the one with her

back towards us?" said a man whose coat fitted doubtfully to a friend whose coat fitted well.

"Just going to ask for the same information," said Mr. Neigh, determining the very longest hair in his beard to an infinitesimal nicety by drawing its lower portion through his fingers. "I have quite forgotten—cannot keep people's names in my head at all; nor could my father either—nor any of my family—a very odd thing. But my old friend Mrs. Napper knows for certain." And he turned to one of a small group of middle-aged persons near, who, instead of skimming the surface of things in general, like the rest of the company, were going into the very depths of them.

"Oh—that is the celebrated Mrs. Petherwin, the woman who makes rhymes and prints 'em," said Mrs. Napper, in a detached paragraph, and then continued talking again to those on the other side of her.

The two loungers went on with their observations of Ethelberta's neaddress, which, though not extraordinary or eccentric, did certainly convey an idea of indefinable novelty. Observers were sometimes surprised to find that her cuts and modes were not acquired by any select communication with the mysterious clique which orders the livery of the fashionable world, for—and it affords a parallel to cases in which clever thinkers in other spheres arrive independently at one and the same conclusion—Ethelberta's fashion often turned out to be the coming one, and this particularly with regard to hair. "Whoever heard of a person's head living six months in advance of her body?" said a quaint old lady, one day. "She must have," said the quainter old gentleman she addressed, "a sort of astronomical table, ma'am, by which she foretells the nodes and conjunctions of fashion by calculating the direction of orbits it has already traversed."

"Oh, is that the woman at last?" said Neigh, diminishing his broad general gaze at the room to a wrinkled quizzing of Ethelberta.

"The rhymes, as Mrs. Napper calls them, are not to be despised," said his companion. "The writer's opinions of life and society differ very materially from mine, but I cannot help admiring her in the more reflective pieces: the songs I don't care for. The method in which she handles curious subjects, and at the same time impresses us with a full conviction of her modesty, is very adroit, and somewhat blinds us to the fact that no such poems were demanded of her at all."

"I have not read them," said Neigh, secretly struggling with his jaw, to prevent a yawn; "but I suppose I must. The truth is, that I never care much for reading what one ought to read; I wish I did, but I cannot help it. And, no doubt, you admire the lady immensely for writing them: I don't. Everybody is so talented now-a-days that the only people I care to honour as deserving real distinction are those who remain in obscurity. I am myself hoping for a corner in some biographical dictionary when the time comes for those works only to contain lists of the exceptional individuals of whom nothing is known but that they lived and died."

"Ah—listen. They are going to sing one of her songs," said his friend, looking towards a bustling movement in the neighbourhood of the piano. "I believe that song 'When tapers tall,' has been set to music by three or four composers already."

"Men of any note?" said Neigh, at last beaten by his yawn, which courtesy nevertheless confined within his person to such an extent that only a few unimportant symptoms, such as reduced eyes and a certain rectangular manner of mouth in speaking, were visible.

"Scarcely," replied the other man. "Established writers of music do not expend their energies upon new verse until they find that such verse is likely to endure; for should the poet be soon forgotten, their labour is in some degree lost."

"Artful dogs—who would have thought it?" said Neigh, just as an exercise in words; and they drew nearer to the piano, less to become listeners to the singing than to be spectators of the scene in that quarter. But among some others the interest in the songs seemed to be very great; and it was unanimously wished that the young lady who had practised the different pieces of music privately would sing some of them now in the order of their composers' reputations. The musical persons in the room unconsciously resolved themselves into a committee of taste.

One and another had been tried, when, at the end of the third, a lady spoke to Ethelberta.

"Now, Mrs. Petherwin," she said, gracefully throwing back her face, "your opinion is by far the most valuable. In which of the cases do you consider the marriage of verse and tune to have been most successful?"

Ethelberta, finding these and other unexpected calls made upon herself, had exclaimed privately whatever may be a lady's equivalent for Here goes! and come to the front without flinching.

"The sweetest and the best that I like by far," she said, "is none of these. It is one which reached me by post only this morning from a place in Wessex, and is written by an unheard-of man who lives somewhere down there—a man who will be, nevertheless, heard a great deal of some day, I hope—think. I have only hastily tried it, though; but if one's own judgment is worth anything, it is the best."

A deaf gentleman who was standing with a friend in the rear declared privately to him upon this that what Mrs. Petherwin said was quite true, and that Wessex was in his judgment as well as hers a very picturesque part of England.

"Let us have your favourite by all means," said another friend of Ethelberta's who was present—Mrs. Doncastle.

"I am so sorry that I cannot oblige you, since you wish to hear it," replied the poetess, regretfully; "but the music is at home. I had not received it when I lent the others to Miss Belmaine, and it is only in manuscript like the rest."

"Could it not be sent for?" suggested an enthusiast who knew that

Ethelberta lived only in the next street, appealing by a look to her, and then to the mistress of the house.

"Certainly, let us send for it," said that lady, who not being able to give heed to a note of any song under the sun in the present state of her mind, had mechanically waited to give effect to whatever might appear likely to please. A footman was at once quietly despatched with precise directions as to where Christopher's sweet production might be found.

"What—is there going to be something interesting?" asked a young married friend of Mrs. Napper, who had returned to her original spot.

"Yes—the best song she has written is to be sung in the best manner to the best air that has been composed for it. I should not wonder if she were going to sing it herself."

"Did you know anything of Mrs. Petherwin until her name leaked out in connection with these ballads?"

"No; but I think I recollect seeing her once before. She is one of those people who are known, as one may say, by subscription: everybody knows a little, till she is astonishingly well known altogether; but nobody knows her entirely. Lady Petherwin her mother-in-law has been taking her about a great deal latterly."

"She has apparently a very good prospect."

"Yes; and it is through her being of that curious undefined character which interprets itself to each admirer as whatever he would like to have it. Old men like her because she is so girlish; youths because she is womanly; wicked men because she is good in their eyes; good men because she is wicked in theirs."

"She must be a very anomalous sort of woman, at that rate."

"Yes. Like the British Constitution, she owes her success in practice to her inconsistencies in principle."

"These poems must have set her up. She appears to be quite the correct spectacle. Happy Mrs. Petherwin!"

The subject of their dialogue was engaged in a conversation with a Mrs. Belmaine upon the management of households—a theme provoked by a discussion that was in progress in the pages of some periodical of the time. Mrs. Belmaine was very full of the argument, and went on from point to point till she came to servants.

The face of Ethelberta showed caution at once.

"I consider that Lady Plamby pets her servants by far too much," said Mrs. Belmaine. "Oh, you do not know her? Well, she is a woman with theories; and she lends her maids and men books of the wrong kind for their station, and sends them to picture-exhibitions which they don't in the least understand—all for the improvement of their taste, and morals, and nobody knows what besides. It only makes them dissatisfied."

The face of Ethelberta showed venturesomeness. "Yes, and dreadfully ambitious!" she said.

"Yes, indeed. What a turn the times have taken! People of that

sort push on, and get into business, and get great warehouses, until at last, without ancestors, or family, or name, or estate——”

“Or the merest scrap of heirloom or family jewel.”

“Or heirlooms, or family jewels, they are thought as much of as if their forefathers had glided unobtrusively through the peerage——”

“Ever since the first edition.”

“Yes.” Mrs. Belmaine, who really sprang from a good old family, had been going to say, “for the last seven hundred years,” but fancying from Ethelberta’s addendum that she might not date back more than a trifling century or so, adopted the suggestion with her usual well-known courtesy, and blushed down to her locket at the thought of the mistake that she might have made—a modest trait in her character which gave great gratification to her husband, and, indeed, to all who knew her.

“And have you any theory on the vexed question of servant-government?” continued Mrs. Belmaine, smiling. “But no—the subject is of far too practical a nature for one of your bent, of course.”

“O, no—it is not at all too practical. I have thought of the matter often,” said Ethelberta. “I think the best plan would be for somebody to write a pamphlet, ‘A Short Way with the Servants,’ just as there was once written a terribly stinging one, ‘A Short Way with the Dissenters,’ which had a great effect.”

“I have always understood that that was written by a dissenter as a satire upon the Church?”

“Ah—so it was: but the example will do to illustrate my meaning.”

“Quite so—I understand—so it will,” said Mrs. Belmaine, with clouded faculties.

Meanwhile Christopher’s music had arrived. An accomplished gentleman who had every musical talent except that of creation, scanned the notes carefully from top to bottom, and sat down to accompany the singer. There was no lady present of sufficient confidence or skill to venture into a song she had never seen before, and the only one who had seen it was Ethelberta herself; she did not deny having practised it the greater part of the afternoon, and was very willing to sing it now if anybody would derive pleasure from the performance. Then she began, and the sweetness of her singing was such that even the most unsympathetic honoured her by looking as if they would be willing to listen to every note the song contained if it were not quite so much trouble to do so. Some were so interested that, instead of continuing their conversation, they remained in silent consideration of how they would continue it when she had finished; while the particularly civil people arranged their countenances into every attentive form that the mind could devise. One emotional gentleman looked at the corner of a chair as if, till that moment, such an object had never crossed his vision before; the movement of his finger to the imagined tune was, for the deaf old clergyman, a perfect mine of interest; whilst a young man from the country was powerless to put an end to an enchanted gaze at nothing at all in the exact middle of the room before him. Neigh,

and the general phalanx of cool men and celebrated club yawners, were so much affected that they raised their chronic look of great objection to things to an expression of scarcely any objection at all.

"What makes it so interesting," said Mrs. Doncastle to Ethelberta, when the song was over and she had retired from the focus of the company, "is, that it is played from the composer's own copy, which has never met the public eye, or any other than his own before to-day. And I see that he has actually sketched in the lines by hand, instead of having ruled paper—just as the great old composers used to do. You must have been as pleased to get it fresh from the stocks like that as he probably was pleased to get your thanks."

Ethelberta became reflective. She had not thanked Christopher; moreover, she had decided, after some consideration, that she ought not to thank him. What new thoughts were suggested by that remark of Mrs. Doncastle's, and what new inclination resulted from the public presentation of his tune and her words as parts of one organic whole, are best explained by describing her doings at a later hour, when, having left Connaught Crescent somewhat early, she had reached home and retired from public view for that evening.

Ethelberta went to her room, sent away the maid who did double duty for herself and Lady Petherwin, walked in circles about the carpet till the fire had grown haggard and cavernous, sighed, took a sheet of paper and wrote:

"Dear Mr. Julian,

"I have said I would not write: I have said it twice; but discretion, under some circumstances, is only another name for unkindness. Before thanking you for your sweet gift, let me tell you in a few words of something which may materially change an aspect of things under which I appear to you to deserve it.

"With regard to my history and origin you are altogether mistaken; and how can I tell whether your bitterness at my previous silence on those points in past days may not cause you to withdraw your act of courtesy now? But the gratification of having at last been honest with you may compensate even for the loss of your respect.

"The matter is a small one to tell, after all. What will you say on learning that I am not the trodden-down 'lady by birth' that you have supposed me? That my father is not dead, as you probably imagine; that he is working for his living as one among a peculiarly stigmatized and ridiculed multitude?

"Had he been a brawny cottager, carpenter, mason, blacksmith, well-digger, navvy, tree-feller—any effective and manly trade in short, a worker in which can stand up in the face of the noblest and daintiest, and bare his gnarled arms and say with a consciousness of superior power, 'Look at a real man!' I should have been able to show you antecedents which, if not intensely romantic, are not altogether antagonistic to romance. But the present fashion of associating with one particular class everything

that is ludicrous and bombastic overpowers me when I think of it in relation to myself and your known sensitiveness. When the bishop's daughter of report melts into"

Having got thus far, a fainthearted look, which had begun to show itself several sentences earlier, became pronounced. She threw the writing into the dull fire, poked and stirred it till a red inflammation crept over the sheet, and then started anew:

"Dear Mr. Julian,

"Not knowing your present rank as musician—whether on the very brink of fame, or as yet a long way off—I cannot decide what form of expression my earnest acknowledgments should take. Let me simply say in one short phrase, I thank you infinitely!

"I am no musician, and my opinion on music may not be worth much: yet I know what I like (as everybody says, but I do not use the words as a form to cover a hopeless blank on all connected with the subject), and this sweet air I love. You must have glided like a breeze about me—seen into a heart not worthy of scrutiny, jotted down words that cannot justify attention—before you could have apotheosized the song in so exquisite a manner. My gratitude took the form of wretchedness when, on hearing the effect of the ballad in public this evening, I thought that I had not power to withhold a reply which might do us both more harm than good. Then I said, 'Away with all emotion—I wish the world was drained dry of it—I will take no notice,' when a lady whispered at my elbow to the effect that of course I had expressed my gratification to you. I ought first to have mentioned that your creation has been played to-night to full drawing-rooms, and the original tones cooled the artificial air like a fountain almost.

"I prophesy great things of you. Perhaps, at the time when we are each but a row of bones in our individual graves, your genius will be remembered, while my mere cleverness will have been long forgotten.

"But—you must allow a woman of experience to say this—the undoubted power that you possess will do you socially no good unless you mix with it the ingredient of ambition—a quality in which I fear you are very deficient. It is in the hope of stimulating you to a better opinion of yourself that I write this letter.

"Probably I shall never meet you again. Not that I think circumstances to be particularly powerful to prevent such a meeting, rather it is that I shall energetically avoid it. There can be no such thing as strong friendship between a man and a woman not of one family.

"More than that there must not be, and this is why we will not meet. You see that I do not mince matters at all; but it is hypocrisy to avoid touching upon a subject which all men and women in our position inevitably think of, no matter what they say. Some women might have written distantly, and wept at the repression of their real feeling; but it is better to be more frank, and keep a dry eye.

"Yours,

"ETHELBERTA."

Her feet felt cold and her heart weak, as she directed the letter, and she was overpowered with weariness. But murmuring "If I let it stay till the morning I shall not send it, and a man may be lost to fame because of a woman's squeamishness—it shall go," she partially dressed herself, wrapped a large cloak around her, descended the stairs, and went out to the pillar-box at the corner, leaving the door not quite close. No gust of wind had realized her misgiving that it might be blown shut on her return, and she re-entered as softly as she had emerged.

It will be seen that Ethelberta had said nothing about her family after all.

CHAPTER XI.

LADY PETHERWIN'S HOUSE.

THE next day old Lady Petherwin, who had not accompanied Ethelberta the night before, came into the morning-room, with a newspaper in her hand.

"What does this mean, Ethelberta?" she enquired in tones from which every shade of human expressiveness was extracted by some awful and imminent mood that lay behind. She was pointing to a paragraph under the heading of "Literary Notes," which contained in a few words the announcement of Ethelberta's authorship that had more circumstantially appeared in the *Wessex Reflector*.

"It means what it says," said Ethelberta, quietly.

"Then it is true?"

"Yes. I must apologise for having kept it such a secret from you. It was not done in the spirit that you may imagine: it was merely to avoid disturbing your mind that I did it so privately."

"But surely you have not written every one of those ribald verses?"

Ethelberta looked inclined to exclaim most vehemently against this; but what she actually did say was, "Ribald—what do you mean by that? I don't think that you are aware what 'ribald' means."

"I am not sure that I am. As regards some words, as well as some persons, the less you are acquainted with them the more it is to your credit."

"I don't quite deserve this, Lady Petherwin."

"Really, one would imagine that women wrote their books during those dreams in which people have no moral sense, to see how improper some, even virtuous, ladies become when they get into print."

"I might have done a much more unnatural thing than write those poems. And perhaps I might have done a much better thing, and got less praise. But that's the world's fault, not mine."

"You might have left them unwritten, and shown more fidelity."

"Fidelity! it is more a matter of humour than principle. What has fidelity to do with it?"

"Fidelity to my dear boy's memory."

"It would be difficult to show that because I have written so-called tender and gay verse, I feel tender and gay. It is too often assumed that a person's fancy is a person's real mind. I believe that in the majority of cases one is fond of imagining the direct opposite of one's principles in sheer effort after something fresh and free; at any rate, some of the lightest of those rhymes were composed between the deepest fits of dismals I have ever known. However, I did expect that you might judge in the way you have judged, and that was my chief reason for not telling you what I had done."

"You don't deny that you tried to escape from recollections you ought to have cherished? There is only one thing that women of your sort are as ready to do as to take a man's name, and that is, drop his memory."

"Dear Lady Petherwin—don't be so unreasonable as to blame a live person for living! No woman's head is so small as to be filled for life by a memory of a few months. Four years have passed since I last saw my boy-husband. We were mere children; see how I have altered since in mind, substance, and outline—I have even grown half an inch taller since his death. Two years will exhaust the regrets of widows who have long been faithful wives; and ought I not to show a little new life when my husband died in the honeymoon?"

"No. Accepting the protection of your husband's mother was, in effect, an avowal that you rejected the idea of being a widow to prolong the idea of being a wife; and the sin against your conventional state thus assumed is almost as bad as would have been a sin against the married state itself. If you had gone off when he died, saying, 'Thank Heaven, I am free!' you would, at any rate, have shown some real honesty."

"I should have been more virtuous by being more unfeeling. That often happens."

"I have taken to you, and made a great deal of you—given you the inestimable advantages of foreign travel and good society to enlarge your mind. In short, I have been like a Naomi to you in everything, and I maintain that writing these poems saps the foundation of it all."

"I do own that you have been a very good Naomi to me thus far; but Ruth was quite a fast widow in comparison with me, and yet Naomi never blamed her. You are unfortunate in your illustration. But it is dreadfully flippant of me to answer you like this, for you have been kind. But why will you provoke me!"

"Yes, you are flippant, Ethelberta. You are too much given to that sort of thing."

"Well, I don't know how the secret of my name has leaked out; and I am not ribald, or anything you say," said Ethelberta, with a sigh.

"Then you own you do not feel so merry as you seem in your book."

"I do own it."

"And that you are sorry your name has been published in connection with it?"

"I am."

"And you think the verses may tend to misrepresent your character as a gay and rapturous one, when it is not?"

"I do fear it."

"Then, of course, you will suppress the poems instantly. That is the only way in which you can regain the position you have hitherto held with me."

Ethelberta said nothing; and the dull winter atmosphere had far from light enough in it to show by her face what she might be thinking.

"Well?" said Lady Petherwin.

"I did not expect such a command as that," said Ethelberta. "I have been obedient for four years, and would continue so—but I cannot suppress the poems. They are not mine now to suppress."

"You must get them into your hands. Money will do it, I suppose?"

"Yes, I suppose it would—a thousand pounds."

"Very well; the money shall be forthcoming. You had better sit down and write about it at once."

"I cannot do it," said Ethelberta; "and I will not. I don't wish them to be suppressed. I am not ashamed of them; there is nothing to be ashamed of in them; and I shall not take any steps in the matter."

"Then you are an ungrateful woman, and wanting in natural affection for the dead!"

"That's an intolerable——"

Lady Petherwin crashed out of the room in a wind of indignation, and went upstairs and heard no more. Adjoining her chamber was a small one called her study, and, on reaching this, she unlocked a cabinet; took out a small deed-box, removed from it a folded packet, unfolded it, crumpled it up, and turning round suddenly flung it into the fire. Then she stood and beheld it eaten away word after word by the flames. "Testament,"—"all that freehold,"—"heirs and assigns" appearing occasionally for a moment only to disappear for ever. Nearly half the document had turned into a glossy black when the old lady clasped her hands.

"What have I done!" she exclaimed. Springing to the tongs she seized with them the portion of the writing yet unconsumed, and dragged it out of the fire. Ethelberta appeared at the door.

"Quick, Ethelberta!" said Lady Petherwin. "Help me to put this out!" And the two women went trampling wildly upon the document and smothering it with a corner of the hearth-rug.

"What is it?" said Ethelberta.

"My will!" said Lady Petherwin. "I have kept it by me lately, for I have wished to look over it at leisure——"

"Good heavens!" said Ethelberta, trampling more wildly than ever. "I'll always cling to you, and never desert you, ill-use me how you may!"

"Such an affectionate remark sounds curious at such a time," said Lady Petherwin, sinking down in a chair at the end of the struggle.

"But," cried Ethelberta, "you don't suppose——"

"Selfishness, my dear, has given me such crooked looks that I can see it round a corner."

"If you mean that what is yours to give may not be mine to take, it would be as well to name it in an impersonal way, if you must name it at all," said the daughter-in-law, with wet eyelids. "God knows I had no selfish thought in saying that. I came upstairs to ask you to forgive me; and knew nothing about the will. But every explanation makes it all stink the more!"

"We two have got all awry, dear—it cannot be concealed—awry—awry. Ah, who shall set us right again? However, now I must send for Mr. Chancery—no, I am going out on other business, and I will call upon him. There, don't spoil your eyes: you may have to sell them."

She rang the bell and ordered the carriage; and half-an-hour later Lady Petherwin's coachman drove his mistress up to the door of her lawyer's office in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

CHAPTER XII.

SANDBOURNE AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD.

WHILE this was going on in town, Christopher, at his lodgings in Sandbourne, had been thrown into rare old visions and dreams by the appearance of Ethelberta's letter. Flattered and encouraged to ambition as well as to love by this sermon from a lay preacher, he put off now the last remnant of cynical doubt upon the genuineness of his old mistress; and once and for all set down as disloyal a belief he had latterly acquired: that "This way, please, if you want to marry," was all a woman had to tell.

All the reasoning of political and social economists would not have convinced Christopher that he had a better chance in London than in Sandbourne of making a decent income by reasonable and likely labour; but a belief in a far more improbable proposition, impetuously expressed, warmed him with the idea that he might become famous there. The greater is frequently more readily credited than the less, and an argument which will not convince on a matter of halfpence appears unanswerable when applied to questions of glory and honour. The regulation wet towel and strong coffee of the ambitious and intellectual student floated before him in visions; but it was with a sense of relief that he remembered that music, in spite of its drawbacks as a means of sustenance, was a profession happily unencumbered with those excruciating preliminaries to greatness.

Christopher talked about the new move to his sister, as may be supposed, and he was vexed that her hopefulness was not roused to quite the pitch of his own. As with others of his sort, his too general habit of accepting the most clouded possibility that chances offered was only transcended by his readiness to kindle with a fitful excitement now and then. Faith was much more equable. "If you were not the most melancholy man God ever created," she said, kindly looking at his vague deep eyes and thin face, which was only a few degrees too refined and poetical to escape the epithet of lantern-jawed from any one who had quarrelled with him, "you would not mind my coolness about this. It is a good thing of course to go; I have always fancied that we were mistaken in coming here. Mediocrity stamped 'London' fetches more than talent marked 'provincial.' But I cannot feel so enthusiastic."

"Still, if we are to go, we may as well go by enthusiasm as by calculation; it is a sensation pleasanter to the nerves, and leads to just as good a result when there is only one result possible."

"Very well," said Faith, "I will not depress you by talking my philosophies. If I had to describe you, Kit, I should say you were a child in your impulses and an old man in your reflections."

"What else should an individual be when impulse is what remains in us from childhood, and reflection what accumulates with age? I would rather make hay in wet weather than be with people who are always alike. However, this is not said of myself, for I have often thought that if I knew a man exactly like myself in every particular, I should not care much about him."

"And if I knew a woman as I know myself, without her being exactly like myself, I should think her very objectionable."

"There's the difference. Well, I am going out now, Faith. Come along with me."

When they had walked a little way, Faith entered a shop to make some small purchase, and Julian walked slowly on. Looking down as he loitered, his eyes fell upon a white handkerchief lying on the pavement, and he picked it up. Ahead of him was apparently the female who had dropped it. Christopher doubled the length of his strides and came up almost beside her. She was his little friend the pupil-teacher, and Christopher hesitated. Surely she had not dropped her handkerchief on purpose? The thought was confusing, and he turned back without her having seen his approach, and joined Faith who was now coming up.

"Faith," he said, "that young lady has dropped her handkerchief; do hasten on, and restore it to her. I am going this way."

Faith went on as bidden, and Christopher turned aside. He was slightly disconcerted some time after, on turning a yet further corner, to find himself encountering the girl again, now walking beside Faith, who had entered into conversation with her, and accidentally entered the same lane from the opposite end. Christopher, fancying that neither of them noticed him, thought it best to pass by on the other side quietly, without looking

towards them. It proved, however, that both of them did see him, when Picotee blushed painfully; whereupon Faith opened her eyes.

The brother and sister did not meet again till the evening. "Did you restore the handkerchief?" Christopher carelessly asked.

"Not to the person you pointed out," she said. "I offered it to her, but it was not hers; she knew nothing about it. And then we saw a lady looking for it, and I gave it to her. Who was that young person—do you know? She seemed to know me and all about our family; so owing to that and the mistake about the handkerchief, we got quite friends."

"Oh, she is a pupil-teacher at the schools in Common Street."

"Only that? Her dress seems beyond her rank; she must be one of a good family grown poor. Why in our best times I myself never wore anything richer in material—or even so rich; but the cut of her clothes being old-fashioned, its goodness escapes notice almost. And when I asked if she had dropped her handkerchief, before saying "No," she looked to see, and I just discerned that the one she carried was widely bordered with what had once been really good lace."

"So that there was only a little plain square in the middle to be called handkerchief, as when you see a picture-frame a foot square containing a miniature an inch across."

"Yes; but the lace was worn and mended beyond usage. Well, it being a beautiful day, I walked on out of the town, and so did she, and then we said a little more and a little more to each other, till I found out something in a very odd way. We met a man, and I saw from her manner at passing him that she loved him, poor girl; and I fancy the young man, whoever he may be, does not care in the least about her." Faith looked at him closely.

"That's very unfortunate," said Christopher, placidly; and she knew from his manner that he was unconscious of holding the cardinal place in the story himself. And she did not remove his ignorance.

"Yes;" Faith continued, "and when I suspected it, and looked her in the face, she blushed painfully, and tears came into her eyes. And when she saw that I noticed her confusion, she quite trembled. It is very foolish of girls, I think, to fling themselves at random at men who may all the time be despising them; I could not help giving her a little lecture about it, which she took very kindly."

"Did you tell her that you were soon going to London?"

"Yes—I just named it. She was quite impressed with the idea, and said she wished from her heart that she was going too. And have you been considering, Kit, any more about when we shall go, and so on?"

"Yes."

"What have you thought?"

"That we may very well leave the place in six weeks, if we wish."

"We really may!"

"Yes. And what is more, we will."

Faith decided to say no more about Picotee on the general ground of its inexpedience.

CHAPTER XIII.

SOME LONDON STREETS.

CHRISTOPHER and Faith arrived in London on an afternoon at the end of winter, and beheld from one of the river bridges snow-white scrolls of steam from the tall chimneys of Lambeth rising against the livid sky behind, as if drawn in chalk on toned cardboard.

The first thing he did that evening when settled in their apartments near the British Museum, before applying himself to the beginning of the means by which success in life was to be attained, was to leave Faith unpacking the things, and sniffing extraordinary smoke-smells which she discovered in all nooks and crannies of the rooms, and move off in the direction of Ethelberta's door. It was some satisfaction to see the house, although the single feature in which it differed from the other houses in the Crescent was that no lamp shone from the fanlight over the entrance—a speciality which, if he cared for omens, was hardly encouraging. Fearing to linger near lest he might be detected, Christopher stole a glimpse at the door and at the steps, imagined what a trifle of the depression worn in each step her feet had tended to produce, and strolled home again.

Feeling that his reasons for calling just now were scarcely sufficient, he went next day about the business that had brought him to town, which referred to a situation as organist in a large church in the north-west district. The post was half ensured already, and he intended to make of it the nucleus of a professional occupation and income. Then he sat down to think of the preliminary steps towards publishing the song that had so pleased her, and had also, as far as he could understand from her letter, hit the popular taste very successfully; a fact which, however little it might say for the virtues of the song as a composition, was a great recommendation to it as a property. Christopher was delighted to perceive, as if it were a chance discovery, that out of this position he could frame an admissible, if not an unimpeachable, reason for calling upon Ethelberta. He determined to do so at once, and obtain the required permission by word of mouth.

He was greatly surprised, when the front of the house appeared in view on this spring afternoon, to see what a white and sightless aspect pervaded all the windows. He came close: the eyeball blankness was caused by all the shutters and blinds being shut tight from top to bottom. Possibly this had been the case for some time—he could not tell. In one of the windows was a card bearing the announcement "This House to be let Furnished."

Here was a merciless clash between fancy and fact. Regretting now his faintheartedness in not letting her know beforehand by some means that he was about to make a new start in the world, and coming to dwell

near her, Christopher rang the bell to make enquiries. A gloomy sort of caretaker appeared after a while, and the young man asked, in a manner denoting that he was not at all interested in the daughter-in-law, whither the ladies had gone to live. He was beyond measure depressed to learn that they were in the South of France—Arles, the man thought the place was called—the time of their return to town being very uncertain, though one thing was clear, they meant to miss the forthcoming London season altogether.

As Christopher's hope to see her again had brought a resolve to do so, so now resolve led to dogged patience. Instead of attempting anything by letter, he decided to wait; and he waited well, occupying himself in publishing a "March," and a "Morning and Evening Service in E flat." Some four-part songs, too, engaged his attention when the heavier duties of the day were over—these duties being the giving of lessons in harmony and counterpoint, in which he was aided by the introductions of a man well known in the musical world, who had been acquainted with young Julian as a promising amateur long before he adopted music as the staff of his pilgrimage.

It was the end of summer when he again tried his fortune at the house in Connaught Crescent. Scarcely calculating upon finding her at this stagnant time of the town year, and only hoping for information, Julian was surprised and excited to see the shutters open, and the house wearing altogether a living look, its neighbours having decidedly died off meanwhile.

"The family here," said a footman in answer to his enquiry, "are only temporary tenants of the house. It is not Lady Petherwin's people."

"Do you know the Petherwins' present address?"

"Underground, sir, for the old lady. She died some time ago in Switzerland, and was buried there, I believe."

"And Mrs. Petherwin—the young lady?" said Christopher, starting.

"We are not acquainted personally with the family," the man replied.

"My master has only taken the house for a few months, whilst extensive alterations are being made in his own on the other side of the park, which he goes to look after every day. If you want any further information about Lady Petherwin, Mrs. Petherwin will probably give it. I can let you have her address."

"Ah, yes; thank you," said Christopher.

The footman handed him one of some cards which appeared to have been left for the purpose. Julian, though tremblingly anxious to know where Ethelberta was, did not look at it till he could take a cool survey in private. The address was "Arrowthorne Lodge, Wessex."

"Dear me!" said Christopher to himself, "not far from Anglebury; and not dreadfully far from Sandbourne."

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CHAPTER XIV.

ARROWTHORNE PARK AND LODGE.

SUMMER was just over when Christopher Julian found himself rattling along in the train on the way to Anglebury, on some trifling business, which would afford him an excuse for calling at Arrowthorne about the song of hers that he wished to produce. He alighted in the afternoon at a little station some seven miles short of Anglebury, and leaving his portmantau behind him there, decided to walk across the fields, obtain if possible the interview with the lady, and return then to the station to finish the journey to Anglebury, which he could thus reach at a convenient hour in the evening, and, if he chose, take leave of again the next day.

It was an afternoon which had a fungous smell out of doors, all being sunless and stagnant overhead and around. The various species of trees had begun to assume the more distinctive colours of their decline, and where there had been one broad pervasive brownish green were now twenty greenish browns, the air in the vistas between them being half opaque with blue exhalation. Christopher in his walk overtook a countryman, and enquired if the path they were following would take him to Arrowthorne Lodge.

"'Twill take 'ee into Arr'thorne Park," the man replied. "But you won't come anigh the Lodge, unless you'd bear round to the left as might be."

"Mrs. Petherwin lives there, I believe?"

"No, sir. Leastwise unless she's but lately come. I have never heard of such a woman."

"She may possibly be only visiting there."

"Ah, perhaps that's the shape o't. Well, now you tell o't, I have seed a strange face thereabouts once or twice lately. A young good looking maid enough, seemingly."

"Yes, she's considered a very handsome lady."

"I've heard the woodmen say, now that you tell o't, that they meet her every now and then just at the closing in of the day, as they come home along with their nitches of sticks; ay, stalking about under the trees by herself—a tall black martel, so long-legged and awful-like that you'd think 'twas the old feller himself a coming, they say. Now a woman must be a queer body to my thinking, to roam about by night so lonesome and that? Ay, now that you tell o't, there is such a woman, but 'a never have showed in the parish; sure I never thought who the body was—no, not once about her, nor where 'a was living and that—not I, till you spoke. Well, there, sir, that's Arr'thorne Lodge; do you see they three elms?" He pointed across the glade towards some confused foliage a long way off.

"I am not sure about the sort of tree you mean," said Christopher. "I see a number of trees with edges shaped like edges of clouds."

"Ay ay, they be oaks; I mean the elms to the left hand."

"But a man can hardly tell oaks from elms at that distance, my good fellow!"

"That 'a can very well—leastwise, if he's got the sense."

"Well, I think I see what you mean," said Christopher. "What next?"

"When you get there, you bear away smart to nor'west, and you'll come straight as a line to the Lodge."

"How the deuce am I to know which is northwest in a strange place, with no sun to tell me?"

"What, not know nor'west? Well, I should think a boy could never live and grow up to be a man without knowing the four quarters. I knowed 'em when I was a mossel of a chiel. We be no great scholars here, that's true; but there isn't a Jack-rag or Tom-straw in these parts that don't know 'em as well as I. Now I've lived, man and boy, these eight-and-sixty years, and never met a man in my life afore who had'n't learnt such a common thing as the four quarters."

Christopher parted from his companion and soon reached a stile, clambering over which he entered a park. Here he threaded his way, and rounding a clump of aged trees the young man came in view of a light and elegant country house in the half-timbered Gothic style of the late revival, apparently only a few years old. Surprised at finding himself so near, Christopher's heart fluttered unmanageably till he had taken an abstract view of his position, and, in impatience at his want of nerve, adopted a sombre train of reasoning to convince himself that, far from indulgence in the passion of love bringing bliss, it was a folly leading to grief and disquiet—certainly one which would do him no good. Cooled down by this, he stepped into the drive and went up to the house.

"Is Mrs. Petherwin at home?" he said, modestly.

"Who did you say, Sir?"

He repeated the name.

"Don't know the person."

"The lady may be a visitor—I call on business."

"She is not visiting in this house, Sir."

"Is not this Arrowthorne Lodge?"

"Certainly not."

"Then where is Arrowthorne Lodge, please?"

"Well, it is nearly a mile from here. Under the trees by the high road. If you go across by that footpath it will bring you out quicker than by following the bend of the drive."

Christopher wondered how he could have managed to get into the wrong park; but setting it down to his ignorance of the difference between oak and elm, he immediately retraced his steps, and passed across the park again through the gate at the end of the drive and into the turnpike road. No other gate, park, or country seat of any description was within view.

"Can you tell me the way to Arrowthorne Lodge?" he enquired of the first person he met, who was a little girl.

"You are just coming away from it, sir," said she. "I'll show you; I am going that way."

They walked along together. Coming abreast the entrance of the park he had just emerged from, the child said, "There it is, sir; I live there too."

Christopher, with a dazed countenance, looked towards a cottage which stood nestling in the shrubbery and ivy like a mushroom among grass. "Is that Arrowthorne Lodge?" he repeated.

"Yes, and if you go up the drive, you come to Arrowthorne House."

"Arrowthorne Lodge—where Mrs. Petherwin lives, I mean."

"Yes. She lives there along wi' mother and we. But she don't want anybody to know it, sir, 'cause she's celebrate, and 'twouldn't do at all."

Christopher said no more, and the little girl became interested in the products of the bank and ditch by the wayside. He left her, pushed open the heavy gate, and tapped at the Lodge door.

The latch was lifted. "Does Mrs. Petherwin," he began, and, determined that there should be no mistake, repeated,—"Does Mrs. Ethelberta Petherwin, the poetess, live here?" turning full upon the person who opened the door.

"She does, sir," said a faltering voice; and he found himself face to face with the pupil-teacher at Sandbourne.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LODGE, *continued*—THE COPSE BEHIND.

THIS is indeed a surprise; I—am glad to see you!" Christopher stammered with a wire-drawn, radically different smile from the one he had prepared—a smile not without a tinge of ghastliness.

"Yes—I am home for the holidays," said the blushing maiden; and after a critical pause, she added, "If you wish to speak to my sister, she is in the plantation with the children."

"O no—no, thank you—not necessary at all," said Christopher, in haste. "I only wished for an interview with a lady called Mrs. Petherwin."

"Yes; Mrs. Petherwin—my sister," said Picotee. "She is in the plantation. That little path will take you to her in five minutes."

The amazed Christopher persuaded himself that this discovery was very delightful, and went on persuading so long that at last he felt it to be so. Unable, like many other people, to enjoy being satirized in words because of the irritation it caused him as aimed-at victim, he sometimes had philosophy enough to appreciate a satire of circumstance, because nobody intended it. Pursuing the path indicated, he found himself in a thicket of scrubby undergrowth, which covered an area enclosed from the park proper by a decaying fence. The boughs were so tangled that in following the obstructed track it became necessary to screen his face with

his hands to escape the risk of having his eyes filliped out by the twigs that impeded his progress. Thus slowly advancing, his ear caught, between the rustles, the tones of a voice engaged in earnest declamation ; and pushing round in that direction, he beheld between some beech boughs an open space about ten yards in diameter, floored at the bottom with hollows full of curled old leaves from foregone years, and risings between them of furry moss. In the middle of this natural theatre was the stump of a tree that had been felled by a saw, and upon the flat stool thus formed stood Ethelberta, whom Christopher had not beheld since the ball at Wyndway House.

Round her, leaning against branches or prostrate on the ground, were five or six individuals. Two were young mechanics—one of them evidently a carpenter. Then there was a boy about thirteen, and two or three younger children. Ethelberta's appearance answered as fully as ever to that of an English lady skilfully perfected in manner, carriage, look, and accent ; and the incongruity of her present position among lives which had had many of Nature's beauties stamped out of them, and few of the beauties of Art stamped in, brought him, as a second feeling, a pride in her which almost equalled his first one of surprise. Christopher's attention was meanwhile attracted from the constitution of the group to the words of the speaker in the centre of it—words to which her auditors were listening with still attention.

It appeared to Christopher that Ethelberta had lately been undergoing some very extraordinary experiences. What the beginning of them had been he could not in the least understand, but the portion she was describing came distinctly to his ears, and he wondered more and more.

"Nobody came near me for an hour or two," said Ethelberta. "I began to think, as one naturally would, that he must have gone from the rock, and left me to pass the night upon it—perhaps to starve there, for the cliffs of the opposite shore were bare of men, houses, animals, or trees. Where were now, I thought, the gallant men who would have laid down life and soul for me but three short hours before ?

"As the evening drew on it came into my mind that I had asked my antagonist what part of the coast we had been landed upon by our mutual enemies. 'The east,' he had said. I could not contradict him ; but it was only necessary to glance across at the setting sun, now pouring its red blaze across the water like a newly opened furnace, to see how completely I had been misinformed.

"However, I was mistaken in supposing myself to be left alone. He was as hopelessly imprisoned as I. I had been sitting in the remoter part of the green level space which covered the top of the rock. The sun had gone down some time since, the night had come on, a cold sea fog was blowing upon my face, and the monotonous wash of the waves beneath was lulling my ears. Somebody rose above the line of the slope, and came near me. The gloom was by this time too profound for me to see anything distinctly, but I immediately guessed that this was he, since he

would naturally wait for night, his blindness ceasing to be a disadvantage when the lateness of the hour had brought the same defect upon myself. It evidently had crossed his mind that I might take advantage of his sightless state to give him a sudden push over the cliff, in spite of his great strength, as long as I possessed one extra sense; in the dark our senses were equal.

"I cannot tell why, but at that moment the affliction of my enemy rendered him still more terrible to me. We were both in darkness, for the fog enveloped us like a pall; but he had the enormous advantage of being used to darkness, whilst to me it was strange and hampering.

"He came forward till he, like myself, was about twenty yards from the edge. I instinctively grasped my useless stiletto. How I longed for the carbine! That, alas! was at the bottom of the creek. Reaching the block or boulder upon which I had been sitting, he clasped his arms round it from behind; his hands closed upon the empty seat, and he jumped up with an oath. This method of attack told me a new thing with wretched distinctness; he had, as I supposed, discovered my sex; male attire was to serve my turn no longer. The next instant, indeed, made it clear, for he exclaimed, 'You don't escape me, masquerading madam,' or some such words, and came on. My only hope was that in his excitement he might forget to notice where the grass terminated near the edge of the plateau, though this could be easily felt by a careful walker: to make my own feeling more distinct on this point, I hastily bared my feet."

The listeners moistened their lips, Ethelberta took breath, and then went on to describe the scene that ensued, "A dreadful variation on the game of Blind-man's-buff," being the words by which she characterized it.

Ethelberta's manner had become so impassioned at this point that the lips of her audience parted, the children clung to their elders, and Christopher could control himself no longer. He thrust aside the boughs, and broke in upon the group.

"For Heaven's sake, Ethelberta," he exclaimed, with great excitement, "where did you meet with such a terrible experience as that?"

The children shrieked, as if they thought that the interruption was in some way the catastrophe of the events in course of narration. Everyone started up; the two young mechanics stared, and one of them enquired, in return, "What's the matter, friend?"

Christopher had not yet made reply when Ethelberta stepped from her pedestal down upon the crackling carpet of deep leaves.

"Mr. Julian!" said she, in a serene voice, turning upon him eyes of such a disputable stage of colour, between brown and grey, as would have commended itself to a gallant duellist of the last century as a point on which it was absolutely necessary to take some friend's life or other. But the calmness was artificially done, and the astonishment that did not appear in Ethelberta's tones was expressed by her gaze. Christopher was not in a mood to draw fine distinctions between recognised and unrecognised organs of speech. He replied to the eyes.

"I own that your surprise is natural," said Christopher, with an anxious look into her face, as if he wished to get beyond this interpolated scene to something more congenial and understood. "But my concern at such a history of yourself since I last saw you is even more natural than your surprise at my manner of breaking in."

"That history would justify any conduct in one who hears it——"

"Yes, indeed."

"If it were true," added Ethelberta, smiling. "But it is as false as ——" She could name nothing inherently or notoriously false without raising an image of what was disagreeable, and, not wishing to do this, she continued in a better manner: "The story I was telling is entirely a fiction, which I am getting up for a particular purpose—very different from what appears at present."

"I am sorry there was such a misunderstanding," Christopher stammered, looking upon the ground uncertain and ashamed. "Yet I am not, either, for I am very glad you have not undergone such trials, of course. But the fact is I—being in the neighbourhood—I ventured to call on a matter of business, relating to a poem which I had the pleasure of setting to music at the beginning of the year."

Ethelberta was only a little less ill at ease than Christopher showed himself to be by his way of talking.

"Will you walk slowly on?" she said gently to the two young men in shirt-sleeves, "and take the children with you; this gentleman wishes to speak to me on business."

Each of the big ones caught up a little one under his arm, and plunged amid the boughs; two others who were too large to be caught up lingered behind for a few moments to look shyly at Christopher, with an oblique manner of hiding their mouths against their shoulders, their eyes behind their elbows, and their elbows in their pinafores. They also vanished, and Ethelberta and Christopher stood within the wood-bound circle alone.

"I hope I have caused no inconvenience by interrupting the proceedings," said Christopher, softly; "but I so very much wished to see you—so very much!"

"Did you, indeed—really wish to see me?" she said gladly. "Never mind inconvenience then; it is a word which seems shallow in meaning under the circumstances. I surely must say that a visit is to my advantage, must I not? I am not as I was, you see, and may receive as advantages what I used to consider as troubles."

"Has your life really changed so much?"

"It has changed. But what I first meant was that an interesting visitor at a wrong time is better than a stupid one at a right time."

"I had been behind the trees for some minutes, looking at you, and thinking of you; but what you were doing rather interrupted the interest of it. I had thought of a meeting in which we should continue our intercourse at the point at which it was broken off years ago, as if the omitted

part had not existed at all; but something, I cannot tell what, has upset all that feeling, and——”

“I can soon tell you the meaning of my extraordinary performance,” Ethelberta broke in quickly, and with a little trepidation. “My mother-in-law, Lady Petherwin, is dead; and she has left me nothing but her house and furniture in London—more than I deserve, but less than she had distinctly led me to expect; and so I am somewhat in a corner.”

“It is always so.”

“Not always, I think. But this is how it happened. Lady Petherwin was very capricious; when she was not foolishly kind she was unjustly harsh. A great many are like it, never thinking what a good thing it would be, instead of going on tacking from side to side between favour and cruelty, to keep to a mean line of common justice. And so we quarrelled, and she destroyed her will that was in my favour, and made another, leaving me nothing but the fag-end of the lease of the town house and the furniture in it. Then, when we were abroad, she turned to me again, forgave everything, and, being ill afterwards, wrote a letter to the brother, to whom she had left the bulk of her property, stating that I was to have 20,000*l.* of the 100,000*l.* she had bequeathed to him—as in the original will—doing this by letter in case anything should happen to her before a new will could be considered, drawn, and signed, and trusting to his honour quite that he would obey her expressed wish should she die abroad. Well, she did die, in the full persuasion that I was provided for; but her brother (as I secretly expected all the time) refused to be morally bound by a document which had no legal value, and the result is that he has everything, except, of course, the furniture and the lease. It would have been enough to break the heart of a person who had calculated upon getting a fortune, which I never did; for I felt always like an intruder and a bondswoman, and had wished myself out of the Petherwin family a hundred times, with my crust of bread and liberty. Now I am going to move for myself, and consider that I have a good chance of success in what I may undertake, because of an indifference I feel about succeeding, which gives the necessary coolness that any great task requires.”

“I presume you mean to write more poems?”

“I cannot—that is, I can write no more that satisfy me. To blossom into rhyme on the sparkling pleasures of life, you must be under the influence of those pleasures, and I am at present quite removed from them—surrounded by gaunt realities of a very different description.”

“Then try the meditative. Trade upon your sufferings: many do, and thrive.”

“It is no use to say that—no use at all. I cannot write a line of verse. And yet the others flowed from my heart like a stream! But nothing is so easy as to seem clever when you have money.”

“Except to seem stupid when you have none,” sighed Christopher, looking at the dead leaves.

Ethelberta allowed herself to linger on that thought for a few seconds ; and continued, "Then the question arose, what was I to do ? I felt that to write prose would be an uncongenial occupation, and altogether a poor prospect for a woman like me. Finally I have decided to appear in public."

"Not on the stage ?"

"Certainly not on the stage. There is no novelty in a poor lady turning actress, and novelty is what I want. Ordinary powers exhibited in a new way effect as much as extraordinary powers exhibited in an old way."

"Yes—so they do. And extraordinary powers and a new way, too, would be irresistible."

"I don't calculate upon both. I had written a prose story by request, when it was found that I had grown utterly inane over verse. It was written in the first person, and the style was modelled after Defoe's. The night before sending it off, when I had already packed it up, I was reading about the professional storytellers of Eastern countries, who devoted their lives to the telling of tales. I unfastened the manuscript and retained it, convinced that I should do better by *telling* the story."

"Well thought of !" exclaimed Christopher, looking into her face. "There is a way for everybody to live, if they can only find it out."

"It occurred to me," she continued, blushing slightly, "that tales of the weird kind were made to be told, not written. The action of a teller is wanted to give due effect to all stories of incident ; and I hope that a time will come when, as of old, instead of an unsocial reading of fiction at home alone, people will meet together cordially, and sit at the feet of a professed romancer. I am going to tell my tales before a London public. As a child, I had a considerable power in arresting the attention of other children by recounting adventures which had never happened ; and men and women are but children enlarged a little. Look at this."

She drew from her pocket a folded paper, shook it abroad, and disclosed a rough draft of an announcement to the effect that Mrs. Petherwin, Professed Storyteller, would devote an evening to that ancient form of the romancer's art, at a well-known fashionable hall in London. "Now you see," she continued, "the meaning of what you observed going on here. That you heard was one of three tales I am preparing, with a view of selecting the best. It was a private rehearsal before my brothers and sisters—not with any view of obtaining their criticism, but that I might become accustomed to my own voice in the presence of listeners."

"If I only had had half your enterprise, what I might have done in the world !"

"Now did you ever consider what a power Defoe's manner would have if exercised by word of mouth ? Indeed, it is a style which suits itself infinitely better to telling than to writing, abounding as it does in colloquialisms that are somewhat out of place on paper in these days, but have a wonderful power in making a narrative seem real. And so, in short, I am going to talk Defoe on a subject of my own.—Well ?"

The last word had been given tenderly, with a long-drawn sweetness, and was caused by a look that Christopher was bending upon her at the moment, in which he revealed that he was thinking less of the subject she was so eagerly and hopefully descanting upon than upon her aspect in explaining it. It is a fault of manner particularly common among men newly imported into the society of bright and beautiful women; and we will hope that, springing as it does from no unworthy source, it is as soon forgiven in the general world as it was here.

"I was only following a thought," said Christopher:—"a thought of how I used to know you, and then lost sight of you, and then discovered you famous, and how we are here under these sad autumn trees, and nobody in sight."

"I think it must be tea-time," she said, suddenly. "Tea is a great meal with us here—you will join us, will you not?" And Ethelberta began to make for herself a passage through the boughs. Another rustle was heard a little way off, and one of the children appeared.

"Emmeline wants to know, please, if the gentleman that's come to see ye will stay to tea; because, if so, she's a going to put in another spoonful for him and a bit of best green."

"O Georgina—how absurd!—Yes, put in some best green."

Before Christopher could say any more to her, they were emerging by the corner of the cottage, and one of the brothers drew near them. "Mr. Julian, you'll bide and have a cup of tea wi' us?" he enquired of Christopher. "A old friend of yours, is he not, Mrs. Petherwin?" [Christopher wondered at the epithet.] "Joe and I be going back to Anglebury to-night, and we can walk with ye as far as the station."

"I shall be delighted," said Christopher; and they all entered the cottage. The evening had grown clearer by this time, and the sun was peeping out just previous to departure, and sent gold wires of light across the glades and into the windows, throwing the pattern of the diamond quarries and the outlines of geraniums in pots against the opposite wall. One end of the room was polygonal, such a shape being dictated by the exterior design, and in this part the windows were placed, as at the east end of continental churches. Thus, from the combined effects of the ecclesiastical lancet lights and the apsidal shape of the room, it occurred to Christopher that the sisters were all a delightful set of pretty saints, exhibiting themselves in a lady-chapel, and backed up by unkempt minor prophets, as represented by the forms of their big brothers.

Christopher sat down to tea as invited; squeezing himself in between two children whose names were almost as long as their persons, and whose tin cups discoursed primitive music by means of spoons rattled inside them until they were filled. The tea proceeded pleasantly, notwithstanding that the cake, being a little burnt, tasted on the outside like the latter plums in snapdragon. Christopher never could meet the eye of Picotee; who continued in a wild state of flushing all the time, fixing her looks upon the sugar-basin, except when she glanced out of the window to

see how the evening was going on, and speaking no word at all unless it was to correct a small brother of somewhat crude manners as regards filling the mouth, which she did in a whisper, and a gentle inclination of her mouth to his ear, and a still deeper blush than before.

Their visitor next noticed that an additional cup and saucer and plate made their appearance occasionally at the table, were silently replenished, and then carried off by one of the children to an inner apartment.

"Our mother is bedridden," said Ethelberta, noticing Christopher's look at the proceeding. "Emmeline attends to the household, except when Picotee is at home, and Joey attends to the gate; but our mother's affliction is a very unfortunate thing for the poor children. We are thinking of a plan of living which will, I hope, be more convenient than this is; but we have not yet decided what to do."

"At this minute a carriage and pair of horses became visible through one of the angular windows of the apse, in the act of turning in from the highway toward the park gate. The boy who answered to the name of Joey sprang up from the table with the promptness of a Jack-in-the-box, and ran out at the door. Everybody turned as the carriage passed through the gate, which Joey held open, putting his other hand where the brim of his hat would have been if he had worn one, and lapsing into a careless boy again the instant that the vehicle had gone by.

"There's a tremendous large dinner-party at the House to-night," said Emmeline, methodically, looking at the equipage over the edge of her teacup, without leaving off sipping. "That was Lord Mountclere. He's a wicked old man, they say."

"Lord Mountclere?" said Ethelberta, musingly. "I used to know some friends of his. In what way is he wicked?"

"I don't know," said Emmeline, with simplicity. "I suppose it is because he breaks the commandments. But I wonder how a big rich lord can want to steal anything." Emmeline's thoughts of breaking commandments instinctively fell upon the eighth, as being in her ideas the only case wherein the game could be considered as at all worth the candle.

Ethelberta said nothing; but Christopher thought that a shade of depression passed over her.

"Hook back the gate, Joey," shouted Emmeline, when the carriage had proceeded up the drive. "There's more to come."

Joey did as ordered, and by the time he got indoors another carriage turned in from the public road—a one-horse brougham this time.

"I know who that is: that's Mr. Ladywell," said Emmeline, in the same matter-of-fact tone. "He's been here afore: he's a distant relation of the squire's, and he once gave me sixpence for picking up his gloves."

"What shall I live to see!" murmured the poetess, under her breath, nearly dropping her teacup in an involuntary trepidation, from which she made it a point of dignity to recover in a moment. Christopher's eyes,

at the mention of his rival's name, followed by that exhibition from Ethelberta, entered her own like a pair of lances. Picotee, seeing Christopher's quick look of jealousy, became involved in her turn, and grew pale as a lily in her endeavours to conceal the complications to which it gave birth in her poor little breast likewise.

"You judge me very wrongly," said Ethelberta, in answer to Christopher's hasty look of resentment.

"In supposing Mr. Ladywell to be a great friend of yours?" said Christopher, who had in some indescribable way suddenly assumed a right to Ethelberta as his old property.

"Yes: for I hardly know him, and certainly do not value him."

After this there was something in the mutual look of the two, though their words had been private, which did not tend to remove the anguish of fragile Picotee. Christopher, assured that Ethelberta's embarrassment had been caused by nothing more than the sense of her odd social subsidence, recovered more bliss than he had lost, and regarded calmly the profile of young Ladywell between the two windows of his brougham as it passed the open cottage door, bearing him along unconscious as the dead of the nearness of his beloved one, and of the sad buffoonery that fate, fortune, and the guardian angels had been playing with Ethelberta of late.

"Perhaps you remember seeing him at the Christmas dance at Wyndway?" she enquired. "He is a good-natured fellow. Afterwards he sent me that portfolio of sketches you see in the corner. He might possibly do something in the world as a painter if he were obliged to work at the art for his bread, which he is not." She added, with bitter pleasantry: "In bare mercy to his self-respect, I must remain unseen here."

It impressed Christopher to perceive how, under the estrangement which arose from differences of education, surroundings, experience, and talent, the sympathies of close relationship were perceptible in Ethelberta's bearing towards her brothers and sisters. At a remark upon some simple pleasure wherein she had not participated because absent and occupied by far more comprehensive interests, a gloom as of banishment would cross her face and dim it for awhile, showing that the free habits and enthusiasms of country life had still their charm with her, in the face of the subtler gratifications of abridged bodices, candlelight, and no feelings in particular, which prevailed in town. Perhaps the one condition which could work up into a permanent feeling the passing revival of his fancy for a woman whose chief attribute he had supposed to be sprightliness was added now by the romantic ubiquity of station that attached to her. A discovery which might have grated on the senses of a man wedded to conventionality was a positive pleasure to one whose faith in society had departed with his own social ruin.

The room began to darken, whereupon Christopher arose to leave; and the big brothers Sol and Dan offered to accompany him.

The Planets put in Leberrier's Balance.

LEVERRIER has recently completed the noblest work in pure astronomy which this age has seen. Five-and-thirty years ago he began to weigh the planets of the solar system in the balance of mathematical analysis. "To-day," said he, addressing the Academy of Sciences at Paris, on December 21 last, "I have the honour to present a paper completing the *ensemble* of work the first piece of which goes back to the 16th of September, 1839." At that time he had only seven leading planets to deal with; it affords some idea of the nature of his work that the discovery of the eighth planet, Neptune, was a mere incident in the progress of his labours. Perplexed by peculiarities in the motions of one particular planet of the set he had undertaken to weigh, Leverrier quietly undertook to calculate the cause of those peculiarities, and so found Neptune. It was a matter of small moment that another great mathematician almost simultaneously accomplished the same task. With Adams the discovery of the unknown planet was the ultimate object of inquiry; with Leverrier it was a mere step in a long series of investigations. To the outside world indeed it was the achievement of all others most deserving of notice in Leverrier's work, just as the discovery of Uranus by Sir W. Herschel attracted attention which labours altogether more important both in their nature and in their results had failed to secure. But Leverrier himself can hardly have so regarded the discovery of Neptune. For him, its chief interest must have resided in the confirmation of his method of procedure afforded by the discovery of a planet through the careful study of perturbations due to that planet's attraction. Such confirmation was afforded at other steps of the work. In fact, the whole series of Leverrier's labours affords perhaps the noblest illustration of the value of deduction guided by and suggesting observations since Newton's *Principia* first proved the superiority of that method over mere induction.*

* According to Bacon, science was to be advanced by making great collections of observations and classifying them—sorting and sifting until the grains of truth were winnowed out. No great discovery has ever been effected in this manner. The real use of observation and experiment has been found in their application to test the deductions from theories formed long before materials sufficient for Bacon's inductive method had been gathered. The question is one of fact. Theoretically, Bacon's method is perfect; it has hitherto failed in practice. Take any of the great discoveries of science, and it will be found that observations and experiments merely gathered together had no part in leading to the discovery; but that observations and exper-

We propose to give such a sketch of Leverrier's method and results as would alone be suited to these pages. It need hardly be said, perhaps, that his work is essentially mathematical—nay, his methods, though not belonging to the very highest developments of modern mathematics, require (even to be understood) a higher degree of mathematical skill than would be implied by mere familiarity with more recent methods in mathematics. Yet it is possible to exhibit the general principles and the results of Leverrier's work in a manner which every one can understand.

In the solar system, we see first a mighty central ruler, whose mass so enormously exceeds that of all the planets taken together, that he is capable of swaying their motions without being himself disturbed. He is not indeed quite fixed. Whatever force he exerts on any planet, precisely that same force the planet exerts on him; but then he is so massive that the pull which compels the planet to circle around the sun scarcely displaces him at all. "If he pulls the planets," says Sir John Herschel, "they pull him and each other; but such family struggles affect him but little. *They amuse them,*" he proceeds quaintly, "*but don't disturb him.* As all the gods in the ancient mythology hung dangling from and tugging at the golden chain which linked them to the throne of Jove, but without power to draw him from his seat, so, if all the planets were in one straight line and exerting their joint attractions, the sun—leaning a little back as it were to resist their force—would not be disturbed by a space equal to his own radius; and the fixed centre, or as an engineer would call it, the centre of gravity of our system, would still lie far within the sun's globe."

To give clearness to our conceptions, let the mass of the sun be compared with that of all the other planets taken together. If we take the earth's mass as one thousand, then the mass of the eight chief planets of the solar system is represented by about four hundred and twenty-two thousand, and the sun's mass by three hundred and fifteen millions. Thus the sun's mass exceeds that of the whole solar system nearly seven hundred and fifty times; for in such a computation the combined mass of all such bodies as the asteroids, moons, meteors, &c., counts for nothing.

We see, then, that the movements of the eight planets must necessarily be determined in the main by the sun's attractive energy. What can even Jupiter, the mightiest of all the planets, do to disturb his giant neighbour Saturn from the path on which the sun, a giant so far mightier than either,

riments suggested by the deductions from theory were all-important. The moon might have been observed at Greenwich for all time without the observations leading to the discovery of gravitation. But Newton's deductions from the theory (when as yet the theory was but a guess) at once showed what observation might do; and it was by observation so made that the theory was established. In spectrum analysis a perfect heap of experiments had been collected without any useful results. Kirchhoff is led by a single observation to think of a theory, deduces certain consequences, tests these by three experiments, and the great discovery is to all intents and purposes effected.

would, by his attractive energy, compel the ringed planet to travel? The sun is more than a thousand times more massive than Jupiter, and though Jupiter when between the sun and Saturn is at but one-half the sun's distance, yet this nearness only quadruples the relatively small power of Jupiter, and leaves the sun's force on Saturn still two hundred and fifty times greater. Besides, Jupiter is only from time to time placed in this favourable position. Half the time he is even farther from Saturn than the sun is, and thus exerts less than a thousandth part of the sun's influence. And it need hardly be said that, if Jupiter is thus ineffective in disturbing a neighbouring planet, every other planet is still weaker to disturb its neighbours. Our earth, for instance, with a mass barely equal to one three hundred and fifteen thousandth part of the sun's, has but small power to disturb her nearest neighbours, Mars and Venus, from that steady motion on their sun-ruled orbits which they would have if the earth did not exist. Venus is still weaker in disturbing the earth and Mercury, her neighbours; Mars weaker still; and Mercury weakest of all. Nor does the gradual diminution of the planetary distances as we draw nearer to the sun at all increase the relative disturbing power of the different planets. It might seem that the contrary should be the case. For instance, the other day, when Venus was in transit she was but about twenty-four millions of miles from us, and it might seem that Venus must then have disturbed the earth, and the earth Venus, very much more effectively (in proportion to their mass) than Jupiter can disturb Saturn or Saturn Jupiter, seeing that these planets never approach within three hundred and fifty millions of miles from each other. But in reality, the effect of proximity in such cases is counterbalanced by the much greater velocity with which the nearer planets travel. It would be easy to make an exact comparison, but the calculation would be unsuited to these pages. Let it suffice to say that throughout the whole of the solar system there is no disturbance greater than that resulting from the mutual attraction of Jupiter and Saturn; and how small this attraction is, compared with the sun's influence on either planet, we have already seen.

The sun being thus placed as supreme ruler over the motions of the planets, their motions starting from any given moment as a beginning, are in the main those due to solar influences. If, instead of being in the main so ruled, they were ruled absolutely by the sun, Leverrier's great work would have had no existence, as it would have had no utility. If the planets did not act upon each other by their attractive energies, any planet might be doubled or halved in mass, and all would go on unchanged. Nay, we might substitute for the eight chief planets as many peppercorns, and still the motions of these eight bodies would remain precisely the same. Calculated for one epoch, they would have been calculated for all time. No deviations would take place from which any inferences could be drawn as to the relative mass of the eight planets; but one continuous series of orbital circlings would go on, without change, for ever and ever.

But once recognise the fact that the planets disturb each other, and all

this is changed. The more massive a planet is, the more potently will it disturb its neighbours. If we can tell exactly how much it does disturb its fellows, we can tell how large its mass is, compared with the earth's for example, which we may take as a convenient unit of reference. But it is clear that a planet's mass may be determined thus in many different ways. For instance, we may consider how much Venus disturbs the earth, and judge of Venus's mass in that way; or instead, we may consider how much Venus disturbs Mercury, her next neighbour on the other side, and infer her mass in that way. We might also perhaps have an opportunity of seeing how Venus affected some unlucky comet which passed near to her, and thus obtain yet another determination of her mass. If these estimates did not agree, we should know there was something wrong either in our observations or in our calculations. We should be set on the track of some error. And it has been in this manner that science has almost invariably been set on the track of important truths. If we hunted down the error successfully, we should probably be led, not merely to correct that particular mistake, but also to discover some fact before unsuspected.

It is precisely in this way that Leverrier has dealt with the planetary motions. Taking first the seven chief planets known when his labours began, he set himself to inquire into their motions. He found before long that the tables hitherto in use did not accord rigorously with observation. Now, if every discrepancy had had a single cause, it would even then have been a work of no small labour to determine each such cause. But the great difficulty which the astronomer has to deal with in considering the planetary perturbations resides in the fact that multitudinous causes are in operation, the effects of which are intermingled. Watch the troubled surface of a storm-swept ocean, and notice how every wave differs from its fellows in one respect or another, usually in many. Suppose now that the task were assigned of analysing the causes of these varieties of form. How difficult would the task be to distinguish one effect from another and therefore one cause from another, when so many were manifestly in operation. A sudden gust of wind blowing against the sloping side of a great wave may aid to heap up or to depress the mass of water which at the moment forms the wave, and thenceforth through many oscillations the effect of that accident will remain. A wave under observation may have been affected by many gusts, acting in various ways. Again, a wave may be increased or diminished by combining with a cross-wave belonging to another series than the first, and such causes of change may have operated over and over again. Peculiarities of the sea-bottom act to modify the shape and size of waves, and a wave observed in one place may have been affected by such peculiarities in regions many miles away from the observer's station. It will be seen, then, that though the observer might find it an easy task to give a general explanation of the sea-waves before him, he would have a task of enormous difficulty—in fact, an altogether hopeless task—if he were asked to ascertain from the varieties of form presented by

the waves, the peculiarities of all the modes of disturbance operative in giving to the waves their actual forms. Somewhat similar, though not altogether hopeless, as will soon appear, is the task of the astronomer called upon to assign to their several causes, *not* the observed perturbations—that would correspond only to explaining the general nature of the wave-motion—but the peculiarities recognised in these perturbations, the various ways in which these differ from what may be described as their normal character.

It need scarcely be said that the motions of the earth herself have to be considered in this inquiry. We do not mean merely the motion of the earth on her orbit around the sun, but the disturbances which affect that motion. The earth herself is riding on the waves of perturbation. Her movement on these waves must be as carefully considered as her motion in her course. For not merely will that movement indicate directly the nature of those waves which particularly affect herself, but also, unless that movement is taken into account, the earth-borne observer will form an incorrect estimate of the waves by which the other vessels in sight are perturbed.

To this work, then, of determining exactly the characteristics of the earth's motion around the sun, Leverrier from the very outset of his inquiry devoted close attention. It need hardly be said that the method of dealing with the question was to observe very carefully the sun's apparent motion from day to day, for this motion precisely corresponds with the real motion of the earth. It will give some idea of the extent of Leverrier's field of research, though but a faint idea of the nature of his work therein, to mention that, in dealing only with this one part of his subject, he reviewed and discussed nine thousand distinct observations of the sun, made since Bradley's time at Greenwich, Paris, and Königsberg. The first result which attracted his attention was rather an unsatisfactory one. It is commonly supposed that the observations of the sun at those three observatories, and especially at Greenwich, have been so exceedingly precise as to leave nothing to be desired on that score. Bessel, of Königsberg, was led to remark, many years since, with some degree of surprise, that the theory of the sun (or, which is the same thing, the theory of the earth's motion) had not made the progress which might have been expected from so many and such accurate observations. Leverrier's opinion, which must be accepted as final, owing to the enormous number of observations he has examined and his unsurpassed skill as a mathematician, is very different. "Our conclusion is," he says, "that the observations of the sun leave much to be desired, on account of systematic errors affecting them; and there is no discordance between theory and observation which cannot be attributed to errors in observing."

Yet even with observations thus imperfect, Leverrier dealt so successfully that he deduced from them a noteworthy discovery. One class of disturbances affecting the earth's motion arises from the moon's disturbing influence. Its nature may be indicated by saying that in every lunar

month the earth circuits around the common centre of gravity of her mass and the moon's. The diameter of this monthly orbit amounts to about six thousand miles, and as a result of this motion, she is about three thousand in advance of the centre of gravity just named when the moon is in her first quarter, and as far behind when the moon is in her third quarter. Now it is that centre of gravity which alone follows the true orbit around the sun which is attributed to the earth herself in the books. The earth no more follows that orbit than the moon does. These two bodies dance round and round each other (if we may follow Sir John Herschel in using a rather homely illustration), while the pair are swung round the mighty mass of the sun. Of course this peculiarity of the earth's real motion is reflected in the sun's apparent motion. He seems at the time of the moon's first quarter to be in advance, and at the time of her third quarter to be behind, his mean place; just as if *he* were waltzing around in a monthly orbit six thousand miles in diameter, while being also swung round in his mighty annual path with its diameter, of a hundred and eighty millions of miles. But it is clear that, if we can tell how large this apparent monthly orbit looks as seen from the earth, we shall know how far off the sun is. For the real size of this orbit is a matter depending only on the earth and moon, and can be inferred independently of the sun's distance. We know, then, how large the path really is; and if we know how much the sun seems displaced in traversing it, we have in fact learned how large a space of six thousand miles looks when removed to the sun's distance. This is equivalent to determining the sun's distance. Accordingly, Leverrier, having carefully estimated the sun's apparent monthly displacements, deduced thence an estimate of the distance of the sun, and confidently informed astronomers, sixteen years ago, that their accepted estimate of the sun's distance was too large by between three and four millions of miles.

This was not the first great result which rewarded Leverrier, though we have set it first because it followed from the inquiry which formed in a sense the basis of his whole system of researches. The first noteworthy result of his labours was that mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the discovery that the system of seven great planets was incomplete, another body, as yet unseen and unknown, travelling beyond the path of Uranus, and by its attraction disturbing the movements of that planet, for sixty years regarded as the remotest member of the sun's family.

And here, as in the case of the discovery of Uranus by Sir W. Herschel, good fortune as well as mathematical insight came into play. Herschel discovered Uranus by a lucky accident, when engaged in far other work than the search for new members of the solar family. Leverrier was not quite so lucky. He deliberately cast a line into space, hoping to capture the unknown disturber of Uranus. He satisfied himself by the most careful analysis of all available observations that Uranus really is disturbed by an unknown body (and, in passing, we may remark that in this respect Leverrier's work differed from that of Adams, who assumed

this particular point). How then, it may be asked, was fortune concerned? We will illustrate the matter by the waves which we have already found convenient for such purposes. Suppose that an observer engaged in analysing a series of wave-disturbances, travelling (say) along a canal, observed some new class of effects, as, for instance, that certain waves which had long been of a particular size began to grow larger. Suppose that, struck by this, he instituted a careful series of measurements of their size, and at last satisfied himself that they had increased. He might still be utterly at a loss to conjecture a cause. But if even he conjectured a cause, as, for instance, some disturbance taking place at a part of the canal out of his sight, he might still find it impossible to conjecture how far off that part might be. If, however, while he had satisfied himself by his wave-measurements that the waves really had increased in size, he had also satisfied himself that even during his observations the increase had reached its full extent, and had even begun to give place to a slow decrease, tending to restore the original size of the waves, he would manifestly have here an indication which might serve to tell him of the very spot where the disturbance had taken place. For example, the rate at which the waves were travelling, combined with the time elapsed since the peculiarity had been noticed, might indicate exactly how many miles away was the scene of the disturbance. Now something of this kind had happened in the case of Neptune. When astronomers were thoroughly convinced that Uranus had been perturbed, or, in effect, when Leverrier had completed his analysis (surpassing all others in completeness) of the planet's observed motions, it had also become known that the displacement had reached its maximum, and was beginning slowly to decrease. This showed astronomers that the disturbing planet had made its nearest approach to Uranus, and was now slowly drawing away. Nor let the reader wonder that this was a process requiring years to produce perceptible effects. For Uranus himself moves so slowly that he only completes his circuit in 84 years, and Neptune (we now know) requires more than $164\frac{1}{2}$ years; so that they come sluggishly into conjunction and pass sluggishly out of conjunction.* Only when Adams and Leverrier began to angle for the unknown planet had it become quite certain that that body had been lately in conjunction with Uranus. If these astronomers had not known when this happened within a few years either way, it would have been utterly useless for them to have sought for Neptune by mathematically analysing the disturbance affecting the movements of Uranus. Their good fortune consisted in this, that the conjunction had opportunely occurred just when the motions of Uranus were sufficiently observed to satisfy astronomers that there was an external planet.†

* That is, they pass slowly into and away from the position in which the sun Uranus, and Neptune are nearly in a straight line.

† The general public, while underrating the mathematical difficulties which Adams and Leverrier had to encounter, altogether overrated the actual extent of the field over which Neptune had to be searched for. It was tolerably certain already that

Setting, however, this piece of good fortune aside, which rendered their labours possible, the actual nature of the work of Adams and Leverrier was sufficiently arduous. And though their hypothetical Neptunes moved quite differently from each other, and departed still more widely from the path of the real Neptune, yet under the actual conditions both astronomers were led, as we know, to point to a place very near to that occupied by the real Neptune at that particular time. It was as though, in the illustrative case just imagined, the observer had made some error in estimating the rate at which the wave disturbance had travelled down the canal to his place, but yet guessed very nearly the true spot where it arose, because the time it had taken was but short; for instance, if the calculated rate were too great by half a mile per hour, but the time occupied were only twenty minutes, then he would only be in error by the sixth part of a mile. But if the time were, say, ten or twelve hours, then the error would be five or six miles. So Leverrier and Adams had their hypothetical Neptunes travelling too slowly by a quite appreciable amount; but yet, owing to the shortness of the time which had elapsed since Neptune and Uranus were in conjunction, the resulting error was very small; and, as we know, the planet was found at the first cast of the telescopic line.

In passing to the next result of Leverrier's researches, we have to turn from the outermost planets of the solar system, to Mercury, the one that, so far as is as yet known, travels nearest to the sun. The motions of Mercury have been determined with a great degree of accuracy, because Mercury often passes across the face of the sun, and can at those times be observed very exactly. Now it was found that the observed movements of this planet did not accord with those calculated. "This result," says Leverrier, quaintly enough, "naturally filled us with inquietude. Had we not allowed some error in the theory to escape us? New researches, in which every circumstance was taken into account by different methods, ended only in the conclusion that the theory was correct, but that it did not agree with the observations. Long years passed, and it was only in 1859 that we succeeded in unravelling the cause of the peculiarities recognised. We found that they were all included under a simple law, and that"—a certain slight change only was needed to bring everything into order. The nature of this change was such as to indicate "the existence of cosmical matter, as yet unknown, circulating, like the planets, around the sun. The consequence," proceeds Leverrier, "is very clear.

Uranus and Neptune had been in conjunction between 1820 and 1825. Between 1841 and 1846, then (i.e. in 21 years), Uranus would have gone round a fourth of the ecliptic as viewed from the sun; and the unknown planet probably about half as far. Neptune, then, was to be looked for near the ecliptic, and about one-eighth of its circuit *behind* Uranus (both being supposed to be viewed from the sun, which, in the case of planets so distant, is much the same as viewing them from the earth). It was, in fact, tolerably certain before Adams and Leverrier began their calculations, that the unknown planet occupied a position somewhere on a known strip of the heavens not more than ten or twelve degrees long by about three degrees broad.

There exists in the neighbourhood of Mercury, doubtless between that planet and the sun, some matter as yet undiscovered. Does it consist of one or more small planets, or other more minute asteroids, or even of cosmical dust? * The theory tells us nothing on this point. On numerous occasions trustworthy observers have declared that they have witnessed the passage of a small planet over the sun; but nothing has been established in this matter. We cannot, however, doubt the exactness of this conclusion."

Such are Leverrier's latest utterances on this interesting question. He takes no notice, on the one hand, of the discoveries recently effected in meteoric astronomy, which demonstrate the existence of at least some matter in the sun's neighbourhood; nor, on the other, of the objections raised by Sir W. Thomson and others to the theory that large quantities of meteoric matter travel close by the sun. Nor does he speak of the singular statements made by the French doctor, Lescarbault, and once to some degree sanctioned by Leverrier himself, respecting the transit of a small black disc across the face of the sun on March 26, in the very year, 1859, when Leverrier first laid his results respecting Mercury before the scientific world. We venture to quote Leverrier's account of his visit to Lescarbault's small observatory, as abridged from the *North British Review* for August 1860, in Chambers's useful treatise, "Descriptive Astronomy." It is well worthy of examination, whether it be regarded as evidence for the new planet—so confidently believed in once, that astronomers assigned a name to it, calling it, appropriately enough, *Vulcan*—or as showing the circumstantial way in which incorrect statements are sometimes advanced:—

"On calling at the residence of the modest and unobtrusive medical practitioner, Leverrier refused to say who he was, but in the most abrupt manner, and in the most authoritative tone, began, 'It is then you, Sir, who pretend to have observed a new planet, and who have committed the grave offence of keeping your observation secret for nine months. I warn you that I have come here with the intention of doing justice to your pretensions, and of demonstrating either that you have been dishonest or deceived. Tell me then unequivocally what you have seen.' The doctor then explained what he had witnessed, and entered into all the particulars regarding his discovery. On speaking of the rough method adopted to ascertain the period of the first contact, the astronomer inquired what chronometer he had been guided by, and was naturally enough somewhat surprised when the physician pulled out a huge old watch with only minute hands. It had been his faithful

* We follow in general a translation of Leverrier's paper in the *Monthly Notices of the Astronomical Society*, not having by us the original; but verbal changes have been made, the translation being, to say the truth, in very singular language. Leverrier, for instance, is made to say that "a matter exists in the sun's neighbourhood," and to ask if it "consists in cosmic dust."

companion in his professional journeys, he said; but that would hardly be considered a satisfactory qualification for performing so delicate an experiment. The consequence was that Leverrier, evidently now beginning to conclude that the whole affair was an imposition or a delusion, exclaimed, with some warmth, 'What, with that old watch, showing only minutes, dare you talk of estimating seconds? My suspicions are already too well founded.' To this Lescarbault replied that he had a pendulum by which he counted seconds. This was produced, and found to consist of an ivory ball attached to a silken thread, which, being hung on a nail in the wall, is made to oscillate, and is shown by the watch to beat very nearly seconds. Leverrier is now puzzled to know how the number of seconds is ascertained, as there is nothing to mark them; but Lescarbault states that with him there is no difficulty whatever in this, as he is accustomed to 'feel pulses and count their pulsations,' and can with ease carry out the same principle with the pendulum. The telescope is next inspected, and pronounced satisfactory. The astronomer then asks for the original memorandum, which, after some searching, is found, 'covered with grease and laudanum.' There is a mistake of four minutes on it when compared with the doctor's letter, detecting which, the *savant* declares that the 'observation has been falsified.' An error in the watch regulated by sidereal time accounts for this. Leverrier now wishes to know how the doctor managed to regulate his watch by sidereal time, and is shown the small telescope by which it is accomplished. Other questions are asked and satisfactorily answered. The doctor's rough drafts of attempts to ascertain the distance of the planet from the sun, 'from the period of four hours which is required to describe an entire diameter of that luminary, are produced, chalked on a board. Lescarbault's method, he being short of paper, was to make his calculations on a plank, and make way for fresh ones by planing them off. Not being a mathematician, it may be remarked that he had not succeeded in ascertaining the distance of the planet from the sun. The end of it all was that Leverrier became perfectly satisfied that an intra-Mercurial planet had been really observed. He congratulated the medical practitioner upon his discovery, and left with the intention of making the facts thus obtained the subject of fresh calculations.'"

This, however, was not the actual end of the matter; for news came from an astronomer in Brazil, M. Liais, that at the very time during which Lescarbault said he watched the black spot crossing the face of the sun, he (Liais) was observing the sun, and nothing of the kind could be seen, though he was employing a telescope much more powerful than the one used by the French physician. It has also been pointed out that any planet nearer to the sun than Mercury ought to be a conspicuous object during total eclipse of the sun, whereas no such object has ever been noticed. On the whole, it seems very doubtful how far the records of supposed transits can be trusted, and we seem almost compelled to adopt the opinion that the meteoric and cometic matter undoubtedly

existing in the sun's neighbourhood in enormous quantities, produces the observed peculiarities in the motion of Mercury. In this case the united mass of all the meteoric matter within the orbit of Venus (not of Mercury, for Leverrier's result admits of explanation by matter lying anywhere within about twice Mercury's distance from the sun) amounts, according to Leverrier's original estimate, to about a tenth part of the mass of Venus, or exceeds considerably the mass of Mercury himself. This is not inconsistent with an exceeding tenuity of material. If the matter consists of small solid or liquid bodies, the sparseness of distribution would be very great. Suppose, for example, these bodies were of the same density as water; then together they would make a globe having about half the volume of the earth. Now, if they were scattered over a flat region shaped like a grindstone, extending all round the sun to Venus's distance, and having a thickness equal to the earth's diameter, this region would exceed the total volume of the scattered meteors no less than four hundred and thirty-five millions of times. So that, on the average, each meteor would have (wherein to disport itself free from contact or collision) a space exceeding its own volume to this enormous degree. A meteor, for example, one cubic inch in volume, would have on the average a space equal in volume to a cube twenty-one yards in length and breadth and height. But the actual space occupied by meteors within the orbit of Venus is far greater, seeing that near the sun it has a thickness (so to speak of this disc-shaped region) of many millions of miles. Supposing the matter occupying this space to be a uniform gas, it would certainly be one hundred thousand million times rarer than water, or much more than a thousand million times rarer than air.

But it will presently appear that since Leverrier made that estimate of the mass of the disturbing matter, the estimate of our earth's mass, relatively to the sun, has been increased by at least one-tenth part; and this would leave a much smaller quantity of matter to be provided by meteoric systems. There remains, however, sufficient evidence to show that the total mass of matter within the orbit of Mercury amounts, in all probability, to thousands of millions of tons.

We may remark on an objection which has been urged (first, we believe, by Sir E. Beckett, then Mr. Denison, in his fine work *Astronomy without Mathematics*) to the theory that vast quantities of meteoric matter in the sun's neighbourhood supply, as it were, the fuel, or part of the fuel, by which the sun's fires are maintained. He showed that the quantity of matter necessary to produce this effect would be such that the sun would grow annually by a quantity equal to more than a twelve-millionth part (he gives exacter numbers) of the sun's actual mass; and he proceeds to show that the effect of this would be to shorten the year by nearly one twenty-five-millionth part of its length—that is, by about four seconds in three years. This would make our year shorter by about forty-seven minutes than the year in the time of Hipparchus, and we know quite cer-

tainly that there has not been a change even of half as many seconds. He proceeds then to touch on an objection to this reasoning, in the following words:—"If the meteors were all, before their absorption within the earth's orbit, forming a sort of spherical extension of the sun, it is true that their joint attraction on the earth would be the same as after they had fallen into the sun. But I have seen no suggestion that this is so, and many meteor systems, especially the two largest that we know of, have orbits extending far beyond the earth's."

This particular objection, or rather this reply to the original objection, had been advanced by the present writer some years ago. Sir E. Beckett's answer does not seem to meet the objection. For all the meteor-systems we can possibly become acquainted with (as such) are those encountered by the earth, and these form so minute a proportion of the total number (on any reasonable assumption of the probabilities) that it would be unsafe to reason from them. In fact, if we could, we might at once dismiss the meteoric theory of the sun's heat, because the two meteor-systems referred to by Sir E. Beckett do not pass within many millions of miles of the sun's surface. All the evidence we have, as the present writer has shown, indicates an increase in the density of meteoric distribution as we approach the sun, this increase becoming exceedingly rapid in the sun's immediate neighbourhood. Nor does it in the least matter that a certain proportion of the meteors thus crowded near the sun at any moment are in reality moving in paths carrying them far away from the sun. So long as the movements of the complete system are such that the gathering near the sun is permanent, though the members composing it may be continually changing, the consequences would be the same, or so nearly the same as to make no appreciable difference in the observed effects.

But there is in the very results on which the meteoric theory had been based—we mean Leverrier's recognition of the existence of intra-Mercurial matter—the strongest evidence that the sun's heat cannot possibly be due entirely or chiefly to meteoric impact. The quantity of downfalling matter necessary to maintain the sun's heat would be equal to about a fortieth part of the earth's mass annually. Now Leverrier's balance will not allow more than four times this amount for the whole quantity of meteoric matter within the orbit of Venus,—granting, that is, to the region of greatest meteoric condensation the widest permissible extension. So that there is only sufficient matter to last for four years, if meteoric downfall were the sole source of the sun's heat, and the meteors were to be continually used up for that purpose. Four times four years have passed since Leverrier first published his results, and neither has the sun grown cold, nor the supply of meteoric matter perceptibly diminished.

Let us next turn to the results obtained by Leverrier when he put the planet Venus in the delicate balance of analysis. Here we come again upon evidence respecting the sun's distance, the theory of Venus leading, like the theory of the sun, to the conclusion that the sun's distance had

been over-estimated by three or four millions of miles. But an interesting confirmation of the accuracy of Leverrier's theory of Venus is the point to which we would chiefly invite the reader's attention. Of course, on the occasion of the late transit, much depended on the accurate calculation of the time when Venus would cross the edge of the sun. The results satisfactorily proved the accuracy of the calculations. For instance, Mr. Hind found that using the old tables of the sun and Venus, the calculated time of egress at Mokattam in Egypt differed by $13\frac{1}{2}$ minutes from the observed time; whereas when Leverrier's new tables were used the calculated time was only five seconds in error. This is very satisfactory evidence of the value of Leverrier's labours.

We come, finally, to Mars, for the planets Jupiter and Saturn follow exactly the motions which theory ascribes to them.

One of the most interesting points, as it seems to us, in Leverrier's discussion of the motions of Mars is the fact that it indicates the wonderful power of mathematical analysis in dealing with matter, apart from all direct evidence as to the existence of such matter. Suppose no telescopic search had been made for the planet which astronomers of old time supposed to be travelling between the paths of Mars and Jupiter. Leverrier's analysis of the motions of Mars would in that case afford evidence decisive of the question whether a large but as yet undetected planet is really travelling in that region or not. It shows that there can be no such planet, simply because Mars shows no traces of the disturbing influence of any considerable planet. But Mars does show the influence of disturbing matter, not giving him a strong pull in this direction at one time and in that direction at another, as a single planet would, but exerting a more equally distributed action. This is the influence of the zone of asteroids, and in this action we have a means of weighing that zone.

But here, unfortunately, a difficulty arises. Leverrier long since pointed out that the peculiar form of disturbance thus affecting Mars might be explained either by ascribing to the whole family of asteroids, when taken together, a weight equal to one-eighth of the earth's, or else by adding so much to the estimate of the earth's weight. This last result corresponds almost exactly with the effect of increasing the estimate of the sun's distance to the degree indicated by Leverrier's other researches. Some of our text-books, with their usual happy freedom of manner, combine these two results (stated by Leverrier in 1861), and assign to the asteroids a total mass equal to one-eighth part of the earth's, while also asserting that Leverrier's researches on Mars, like those on Venus, proved that the earth's mass must be increased by an eighth. But we cannot assign the observed effects fully to both causes at once, though we may assign part of the observed effects to one cause and part to the other. Leverrier himself does not, indeed, mention this. His words are as follows:—"Only two hypotheses were possible, as we explained on June 8, 1861; either the hitherto neglected matter resided in the totality of the ring of small planets, or else it must be added to the

earth itself. In the second case, and as a consequence, the distance of the sun must be diminished by about a twenty-fourth part of the " (then) "received value—that is, we are led to the result already obtained from the theories of the sun and Venus." But then, if we ascribe the whole effect to the original erroneous estimate of the sun's distance, we are left in this predicament—that we can assign *no mass at all* to the whole family of asteroids.

Here, then, as in the case of Mercury, we see that we have to wait till the sun's distance is determined with much more exactness than heretofore, before we can ascertain the real results of Leverrier's planet-weighing. He has put these planets severally in the balance, and noted the result; but the balance itself has to be inquired into before we know what the result means. It can hardly be doubted that the transit observations made last December will come in very usefully at this point. We shall learn from them how much must be added to the old estimate of the earth's weight (or, which is exactly the same thing, how much must be taken from the old estimate of the sun's weight), and therefore we shall know how much is left, on the one hand, for intra-Mercurial matter, and, on the other, for the asteroidal family.

Now, it is somewhat strange that this being so,—Leverrier's own results pointing to the importance of direct measurement of the sun's distance by transit observations, or in any other available manner,—he has nevertheless spoken quite disdainfully of those direct modes of measurement. Because in weighing the planets in his analytical balance, poised and adjusted with marvellous skill, he has found clear evidence that the old measurements of the sun's distance were erroneous, he deprecates new measurements. "Here I have," he says in effect, "a way of testing such measurements so delicate that in itself it is preferable to them all. The balance I have used is one which will improve with advancing years, and as, in 1861, it had detected the error in measurements of the sun's distance effected in 1769, so, long before the transits of the twenty-first century, it will have given results altogether more accurate than those you are attaining at so much expense by observing the transits of the present century." This is all very well; but Leverrier's own results leave something to be explained which these despised transit observations are competent to explain at least a good deal more accurately than he has himself explained them. His method, carefully kept in bottle for another half-century, may, and probably will, give us a much clearer wine (to use Bacon's simile), but in the meantime we must be content with the vintage of 1874 and 1882.

But this in no sense affects the value of Leverrier's own labours. Beyond question he has deduced from the observed motions of the planets all that at present can be deduced as to the masses of the different known and unknown parts of that complex system,—containing bodies of all orders of size, density, and structure,—which occupies the domain of space ruled over by the sun. We spoke of his work, begun

more than a third of a century ago, as the noblest work in pure astronomy which this age has seen. This certainly seems no exaggerated estimate of its value. A portion only of the work—that which led to the discovery of Neptune—has been called the greatest achievement of mathematical astronomy since Newton's discovery of the law of gravitation. As regards this portion of his labours, his credit is shared by another astronomer not less skilful than Leverrier, though circumstances have prevented him from pursuing his course along the difficult path for which his powers fit him. Other astronomers, again, have shared with Leverrier the labour of analysing the movements of particular planets, or rather have gone over the same ground with somewhat similar results. But as Sir John Herschel alone of all astronomers ever surveyed with high telescopic powers the whole of that star-lit sphere surrounding our earthly home, so Leverrier alone has submitted to the searching scrutiny of the higher mathematical analysis the whole of that complicated system to which the earth belongs. It adds not a little to the credit due to him for these achievements that during the greater part of his labours he held a high official post, the duties of which (had he been content to follow an example but too common) might well have exonerated him from the continuance of independent labours so arduous and exacting.

The Prometheus Bound.

Of all the masterpieces of Greek Tragedy which have been preserved to us, the Prometheus of Æschylus presents by far the greatest difficulty, and involves at the same time by far the most enticing problems. Its paramount interest lies in the fact that the dramatic action is removed beyond and above the sphere of humanity, and that the poet, who was also the chief prophet of Hellas in the very prime of Athenian culture, is dealing with the mystery of God's relation to the world and man. In the trilogy of the *Oresteia* he is concerned with heroes; in the *Prometheus* with Gods, Titans, and Demigods. The *dramatis personæ* are Prometheus, Hephæstus and his comrade Force, Hermes, the herald of Zeus, Io, the victim of the love of Zeus, and Oceanus, the ruler of the streams and seas. The Chorus is composed of Oceanides, the maiden daughters of the deep, cloud-bearing dews and mists, who gather round the Scythian crags, where Prometheus lies, chained, and exposed to fiery heat by day and freezing cold by night. The only mortal who visits him is Io; and she bears within her the child of Zeus. Thus everything in the tragedy is conceived upon a vast and visionary scale. It is no episode of real or legendary history which forms the subject-matter of the play. The powers of heaven and earth are in action. The destinies of Olympian Zeus and of the whole human race are at stake. In this lofty region of the imagination the genius of Æschylus moves freely. The scenery of his drama is in harmony with its stupendous subject. Barren mountain summits, the sea outspread beneath, the sky with all its stars above, silently falling snowflakes and tempestuous winds, thunder, and earthquake, and riven precipices, are the images which crowd upon the mind. In like manner the duration of time is indefinitely extended. Not years but centuries measure the continuance of the struggle between the sovereign will of Zeus and the stubborn resistance of the Titan.

At the opening of the play Prometheus appears in the midst of the desert which is destined for his prison-home. Hephæstus and his satellites chain him down with adamantine rivets, so that he may neither bend the knee nor rest in slumber, but must cling, crucified in wakeful torment, to the unyielding rock. While they are at their work, Prometheus utters not a word or groan. He is gifted with unerring foresight, and knows surely that his doom must be borne, and also that his doom must have an end. He defies the power of Zeus in frigid silence—not sullenly, because, when sympathy has loosed his lips, he proves that a warm heart beats within his breast—but proudly and indignantly. Hephæstus and

Titanic Force leave him alone in his misery, when their task is finished. Then at last he speaks. It is to the kindred powers of elemental nature, to the Sun and Sea and nourishing Earth, his brethren and his mother, that he addresses his complaint: "See you how I, a god, suffer at the hands of God; and for what crime?—*for having given fire to mortal men.*"

This, then, is the sin of Prometheus. He found humanity abject and forsaken by the gods. Zeus, who had recently seized upon the empire of the universe, designed to extirpate men from the world, and to create a new race after his own heart. Prometheus took pity upon them, saved them from destruction, gifted them with fire, the mother of all arts, taught them carpentry and husbandry, revealed to them the stars whereby they knew the order of the seasons and recurrences of crops, instructed them in letters, showed them how to tame the horse and ox, and how to plough the sea with ships, then taught them medicine and the cure of wounds, then divination and the sacrifice of victims to propitiate the gods, and lastly how to smelt the ore contained within the bowels of the earth. All these good things Prometheus gave to men. And here, in passing, we may notice how accurately Æschylus has sketched the primitive conditions of mankind in its emergence from the state of savagery. The picture is indeed poetical; but subsequent knowledge has only strengthened the outlines and filled them in with details, not altered or erased them.

Now, however, we ask: In what true sense was Prometheus criminal? What right had Zeus, who is invariably represented by Æschylus in all his other dramas as a just and wise ruler, to impose these trials on the benefactor of the human race? Æschylus, in this play, clearly desires to rouse our sympathy for Prometheus. He makes all the principal actors speak of Zeus as a forceful tyrant, newly come to power, which he abuses for his selfish ends, subverting the old order of the world, oppressing the old powers who are his kindred, yet substituting nothing but his own ill-regulated and capricious will. On the other hand, Æschylus has indicated that Prometheus is in the wrong, that he regards his disobedience to Zeus as the cause of merited punishment. The Chorus points this moral by asserting, in spite of their tender feeling for the Titan, that they only are sane and righteous who bow to necessity and accept the law of their superior. Oceanus in like manner advises his kinsman to submit, and reminds him that, though the rule of Zeus is a novelty, it is not intolerable, and that acquiescence is always prudent.

The chief difficulty of the play consists, therefore, in understanding the error of the protagonist, and in reconciling the character of Zeus, as here depicted, with the theology elsewhere expressed by Æschylus. The most probable solution of the problem is suggested by the ideal to which Greek tragedy aspired. It was the object of the Athenian dramatists not to represent a simple study of character, or to set forth a merely stirring

action, but to depict a hero worthy of all respect and admirable, exposed to suffering or ruin by some fault of temperament. We are probably meant to look upon Prometheus as having erred, though nobly, through self-will, because he would not obey the ruler of the world for the time being, nor abide the working out of the law of fate in patience, but tried to take that law into his own hands and to anticipate the evolution of events. At the same time the play seems to convict supreme Zeus himself of a tyrannical exercise of a forcefully acquired power; he also, through a like self-will, appears to be kicking against the pricks of immutable destiny; and it is prophesied that in his turn he will be superseded by a more righteous ruler. The secret of the revolution in Olympus through which Zeus will be deposed is possessed by Prometheus, and withheld by him from his tormentor. Thus the knowledge of the future enables the hero of the drama to endure, while Zeus upon his throne is anxious, owing to his consciousness that fate cannot be resisted. Therefore the *Prometheus*, as we possess it, presents the spectacle of two stubborn wills in conflict. The action is suspended. The conclusion cannot be foreseen. Owing to its very excellence as a work of art, it contains no indication of the ultimate solution; we are only told by Prometheus that, after he has been liberated, and not till then, he may reveal the means by which the ruin of Zeus shall be averted. We are left to conjecture that Æschylus intended to harmonize the wills of the Titan and his tormentor through the final submission of both alike to the laws of destiny which are supreme. Prometheus, when once his pride has given way, will reveal the secret which he holds, and Zeus, made acquiescent by the lapse of time, will accept it.

The chief obstacle to the satisfactory interpretation of the *Prometheus* springs, as I have hinted, from the difficulty of understanding how Prometheus was guilty and Zeus justified. The transgression of the hero, if it deserves the name at all, was eminently noble. His punishment appears extravagant in its severity. At first sight we can hardly avoid the conclusion that the final alliance between the two conflicting actors in this drama was a kind of political compromise, unworthy of the protagonist. To this judgment Shelley was led by his hatred of despotism, and by his inability to imagine a dignified termination to the dispute which enlisted his sympathies so strongly on the side of the disinterested hero. "I was averse," he says in the Preface to *Prometheus Unbound*, "from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary." Those, however, who have learned to respect the lofty theosophy of Æschylus no less than to admire his imperial artistic faculty, will be slow to accept the conclusion of Shelley, or to believe that the catastrophe prepared by the Greek poet was feeble.

They will rather mistrust their powers of judgment, or suspect that the key to the riddle has been lost. The truth is that we have no means of settling what the catastrophe really was; and at this point it is necessary to give some account of the relation of this drama to the entire scheme of Æschylus.

The *Prometheus Bound* (δεσμώτης) was probably the second of a trilogy or series of three tragedies, of which the first was called *Prometheus the Fire-bearer* (πύρροπος), and the third *Prometheus Unbound* (λυόμενος). *Prometheus the Fire-bearer* and *Prometheus Unbound* have disappeared; it seems that they were not even known to the Greek scholiast, for he does not mention them in his argument to the *Prometheus Bound*. At the same time the argument prefixed to the *Persæ* informs us that that play was the second in a series, of which the *Phineus* was first, the *Glaucus Potnieus* third, and the *Prometheus* fourth. It has been conjectured that the *Prometheus*, which formed the fourth or satyric drama in this tetralogy, or series of four plays, was distinguished by the title *Fire-kindler* (πυρκαεύς), a name which is mentioned in an obscure passage of Pollux; and that consequently four plays altogether by Æschylus bore the title of *Prometheus*. It cannot, however, be proved that the *Fire-kindler* existed independent of the *Fire-bearer*, or, if so, that the former was the last play in the tetralogy of the *Persæ*, the latter the first in the trilogy of the *Prometheus Bound*. Both arguments to the only *Prometheus* we possess entire are unfortunately silent about the plays which accompanied it; and it is only from allusions to a lost tragedy called *Prometheus Unbound* that we are at all justified in assuming the loss of the first drama of the series, and in calling it the *Fire-bearer*. It should be added that the learned editor of the Greek Scenic Poets is inclined to identify the *Fire-bearer* and the *Fire-kindler*, and to regard this play as the satyric drama attached to the tetralogy of the *Persæ*. By so doing he leaves the *Prometheus Bound* and *Unbound* without a proper dramatic introduction.

In spite of the uncertainty which surrounds the criticism of this play, no students familiar with the style of Æschylus will fail to recognise in the *Prometheus Unbound* the second drama of a trilogy. It has the stationary character which belongs to the *Choëphoræ*, the *Persæ*, and the *Suppliees*. The dramatic action is not helped forward in these second pieces; they develop the situation to which affairs have been brought by the events of a previous drama, and which in its turn must lead to the conclusive action of the third piece. It was only in this way that a series of three dramas on the same subject could be connected into true artistic unity. The catastrophe of the first play produced a combination of events which required such expansion in a second that a new action, involving a final catastrophe, should be unfolded in the third, and the whole series should be seen to have coherence. Now the *Prometheus Unbound* is unintelligible except as the result of a preceding action, while its conclusion leaves the fate of the hero still undetermined: the events which brought the hero to his dreadful doom, and the events which will deliver him,

are alluded to as things of the past and of the future ; in the present there is no drama, no doing, but only a development of the intermediate and transitional situation. We have therefore the right to assume the antecedence of a play which must, according to the data given in our extant tragedy, have turned upon the hero's theft of fire.*

Let us now attempt to reconstruct the whole trilogy and see if, having done so, any new conditions are supplied for the solution of the difficulty which was stated at the opening of this essay. In the *Fire-bearer*, for the subject matter of which we have to rely on the allusions of the *Bound*, Zeus has recently acquired the empire of the universe by imprisoning his father Cronos, and by defeating the giants who rose up in arms against him. Prometheus, knowing through the inspiration of his mother Earth or Themis that Zeus will prevail, has taken his side, and has materially helped him in the conflict. But the sympathies of Prometheus are less with Zeus than with the race of men, who at that primitive period of the world's history existed in the lowest state of wretchedness. Zeus, intent on getting his new kingdom into order, entertains the notion of destroying mankind and planting a better stock of mortal beings on the earth. Prometheus opposes this design, and enables men to raise themselves above their savage condition into comparative power and comfort. It is just at this point that the lost drama would probably have revealed the true nature of his offence or *ἀμαρτία*. In the Hesiodic legend he is punished for having taught men to deceive the powers of heaven ; and though it is clear that Æschylus did not closely follow that version of the myth, we may conjecture that he represented the benefactor of humanity as a rebel against the ruler of Olympus. Against the express command of Zeus he gave men fire ; and though this act seems innocent enough, we must remember that, according to Genesis, Adam lost Eden by merely plucking an apple. Satisfied with his own sense of justice, and hardened in his pride by the foreknowledge of the future, Prometheus resisted a power which he regarded as tyrannical, and had to be treated by Zeus with the same severity as Atlas or Typhæus.

In the *Prometheus Bound* we see the beginning of his punishment. The Titan, in whose person, as it were, the whole race of mortals suffer, is crucified on a barren cliff of Scythia. Meanwhile he makes two prophecies—first, that a descendant of Io is destined to deliver him ; and, secondly, that Zeus will marry and beget a son, who shall sway the universe in his place. At the same time he declares that he knows how Zeus may avoid this danger. Zeus, anxious to possess this secret, sends down Hermes, and endeavours to wrest it from his prisoner with threats ; but Prometheus abides, scornful and unyielding ; his pain may be increased, but it cannot last for ever ; he is immortal, and Zeus will in the end be humiliated. To requite his contumacy, Zeus rends the mountains, hell is opened, and Prometheus descends to the lowest pit of Tartarus.

* See line 107.

It is clear that, whatever may have been the fault of Prometheus in the *Fire-bearer*, the poet has done all in his power to excite our sympathy for him in the second drama of the trilogy. He draws the character of Oceanus as a trimmer and time-server, who inspires contempt. He introduces Io suffering as a wretched victim of the selfish love of her almighty master. He makes the Oceanides willing at the end to share the doom of the Titan; while all the human sympathies of the audience are powerfully affected by the spectacle of a martyrdom which has been incurred for their sake. This play is, therefore, the triumph of the protagonist; his offence is hidden; his heroic resistance is idealised; we are made to feel sure that, when at last he is reconciled with Zeus, it will be through no unworthy weakness on his part.

In the third drama of the trilogy, parts of which, translated into Latin by Cicero, have been preserved to us, Prometheus has been raised from Tartarus, and is again crucified on Caucasus. A vulture sent by Zeus daily gnaws his liver, which, daily growing, supplies continually fresh food for the tormentor. The tension of the situation is still protracted. Prometheus has not given way. Zeus has not relented. Meanwhile the seasons have revolved through thirteen generations of the race of men, and the deliverer appears. It is Herakles who cuts the Gordian knot. He destroys the vulture, and persuades his father Zeus to suffer Cheiron, the Centaur, whom he had smitten with a poisoned arrow, and who is weary of continued life, to take the place of the Titan in Hades. Then Prometheus is liberated. He declares that Zeus, if he would avoid the coming doom, must refrain from marriage with Thetis. He binds the willow of repentance round his forehead, and places the iron ring of necessity upon his finger. His will is made at last concordant with that of his enemy. Thetis is given in wedlock to the mortal Peleus, and Achilles is born.*

From this last drama of the trilogy it would appear that the honours of the whole series were reserved for Herakles. Herakles is the offspring of Zeus by a mortal woman. He occupies, therefore, a middle place between the two contending parties, and is able to effect their reconciliation. We may fairly conclude that herein lay the solution designed by Æschylus. In order to mediate between Zeus and Prometheus a third agency was imperatively demanded. The heroic demigod, who is the son of the Olympian, and at the same time a scion of oppressed humanity, prompted by no decree of his father, but following the instincts of his generous humanity, will not allow the torments of Prometheus to continue. By killing the vulture, he resolves the justice of Zeus in an act of mercy; at the same time, he touches the heart of the Titan, and draws his secret from him. We may imagine that a revolution was wrought in the stubborn nature of Prometheus by the intervention of Herakles, similar to that which Neoptolemus effected in Philoctetes by his humane uprightness. It is

* It should be said that the subject matter of the *Prometheus Unbound* has to be gathered partly from fragments of the play, partly from prophecies in the *Prometheus Bound*, and partly from later versions of the legend.

thoroughly in accordance with the spirit of Greek Tragedy that the scales should thus have fallen from the eyes of Prometheus. He saw at last that Zeus, though severe, was really justified, and, as a makepeace offering, he rendered up the secret which brought the ruler of the world into harmony with the immutable laws of fate. According to this solution of the plot, the final concession of Prometheus would have been as noble as his intermediate resistance; the *πείσινεσις*, or revolution, which was imperatively required before the drama could have been conducted to an issue, would have taken place within the protagonist's soul, while Herakles, by introducing a new element into the action, furnished the efficient cause of its conclusion. It may be argued that Prometheus foreknew the advent of Herakles, and prophesied of him to Io in the second drama of the trilogy. To this I should answer that he could not then have calculated on the change which would be wrought in his own character by the deliverer.

How Æschylus handled the subject-matter of the *Prometheus Unbound* we cannot say. It seems, however, certain that, unless he falsified his otherwise consistent conception of Zeus, as the just and wise, though stern, lord of the universe, and unless he satisfied himself with a catastrophe which Shelley would have been justified in calling "feeble," he must, through Herakles, have introduced a factor capable of solving the problem by revealing to Prometheus the nature of his original *ἀμαρτία*, and rendering it dignified for him to bow to Zeus.

If this reading of the *Prometheus* be accepted, it will be seen that the whole trilogy involved the deepest interests, the mightiest collision of wills, the most pathetic situations, and the most sublime of reconciliations. Zeus, in the second drama of the series, is purposely exposed to misrepresentation in order that his true character in the climax as

τὸν φρονεῖν βροτῶν δδάζαντα, τὸν πάθῃ μᾶλλον
θίντα κυρίως ἔχειν *

may be established. The divine justice personified in Zeus is displayed irreconcilably opposed to the natural will personified in Prometheus, until the hero who partakes of both, the active and unselfish Herakles, atones them. We are even justified in conjecturing that, as Prometheus occupied the foreground of the second drama, so Zeus must have been paramount in the first, and that the two antithetical propositions having thus been stated, the chief part of the third play was assigned to Herakles. What strengthens the interpretation now advanced is the peculiar nature of the punishment of Prometheus. The liver, according to antique psychology, was the seat of the passions; consequently Prometheus suffered through the organ of his sin.

That Æschylus intended to describe the protagonist of his trilogy as a transgressor, though offending in a noble cause, while Zeus was acting in accordance with real justice, however hard to comprehend, is further

* "Him who leads men in the ways of wisdom, who has ordained that suffering should teach."

indicated by the series of events which are supposed to have taken place between the termination of the *Fire-bearer* and the climax of the *Unbound*. All this while Prometheus in his obstinacy is suffering on Caucasus and in the depth of Tartarus; but the way of salvation is meantime being wrought out on earth. By the commerce of the Olympian deities with the daughters of men the heroic race is generated; and not only is the deliverer and reconciler, Herakles, sent forth to purge the world of monstrous wrong, but the better age of equity and justice, foreseen by the Titan and ordained by the Fates, is being prepared. The marriage of Thetis to Peleus is the proper inauguration of the heroic age; it not only confirms Zeus in his sovereignty, but it also provides for humanity the greatest actor in the drama of the Trojan War—the first historical event of Hellas.

If the character ascribed to Zeus in the *Prometheus Bound* still seems to offer difficulties; if, in other words, we are not satisfied with assuming that his conduct must have been justified by the evolution of events in the *Prometheus Unbound*, the following considerations may be adduced by way of further explanation. In the first place, at the supposed time of the *Prometheus Bound*, Zeus was but just seated on his throne, and had to deal with unruly and insurgent powers. The punishment of Prometheus was an episode in the Titanomachy. It was the business, therefore, of Æschylus to exhibit the firmness and force of government of the new ruler, not to draw the picture of a kind paternal monarch. In the second place, the speakers who describe Zeus as despotic, belonged by kinship to the old order of the Titans, or were closely related through friendship to Prometheus. Dramatic propriety required that they should calumniate the new king, or at least misunderstand his motives. In the third place, Io, whose fate appeared so hard, became the mother of a mighty nation, and received tenfold for all her sufferings at the hand of Zeus.* Here, therefore, his inscrutable ways were in the end proved righteous; nor is it probable that if Æschylus justified Zeus in his dealings with the unoffending Io, he would leave his treatment of Prometheus unexplained. In the fourth place, the theology of the Greeks was not absolute like that to which we are accustomed through Christianity. The power ascribed to their deities was political and economical. Fate and necessity determined the action of even Zeus, who was himself an outgrowth from an earlier and ruder order. They also imagined a gradual development in the moral order of the universe. The intellectual powers of Olympus superseded the old nature-forces of the Titanic Cosmogony. There was, therefore, nothing ridiculous to the Greek mind in the notion that Zeus might be conceived as growing in wisdom and in righteousness. In the fifth place, we must remember that the Athenian audience, familiar with the Hesiodic legend of Prometheus, were better prepared than we are, while listening to the invectives against Zeus in the second drama of the trilogy, to accept his triumphant justification in the third.

* See *Supplices*, 524-599.

Not only is the trilogy of Æschylus, if, indeed, he composed a Promethean trilogy at all, now irrecoverable except by hazardous conjecture; but, what is more unfortunate, the whole mythus on which it was based, has descended to us in hopelessly mutilated fragments. We can clearly perceive that it enshrined the deepest speculations of the Greeks concerning the origin of humanity, the relation of deified intelligence to material nature and to abstract necessity, the kinship between the human soul and the divine spirit, and the consciousness of sin, which implies a division between the will and the reason. Furthermore, there are hints implied in it of purification through punishment, of ultimate reconciliation, and of vicarious suffering. But the fabric of the legend is so ruined, that to reconstruct these elements of a theological morality is now impossible. Moreover, the very conditions under which the mythus flourished, tended to divert the minds of the Greeks themselves away from the underlying meaning to the romantic presentation. The story could not fail to usurp upon the doctrine. Like the Glaucus of Greek mythology, whom Plato used as a parable in the *Republic*, the idea which takes shape in a legend during the first ages of human speculation, gathers an accretion of the sea-weeds and the shells of fancy round it, lying at the bottom of the ocean of the human mind through centuries, so that, when it emerges into the light of critical inquiry, the original lineaments of the conception are deformed and overgrown, and to strip it bare and see it clearly is no easy matter. Far more difficult is the task when only the maimed fragments, the *disjecta membra*, of the myth, remain to us.

However freely Æschylus may have dealt with the tale of Prometheus, however he may have employed it as a vehicle for rational theology, he cannot have wholly eliminated those qualities which belonged to it as a Saga rather than a chapter of religious tradition. Indeed, by dramatising he was probably impelled to accentuate the legendary outline at the expense of philosophical coherence. This consideration may explain some of the apparent incongruities in his fable, to which attention has not been yet directed in this essay. One of these concerns the position of the human race between Zeus, their apparent oppressor, and Prometheus, their avowed champion. It was for the sake of mankind that Prometheus disobeyed Zeus; it was through severity towards mankind that Zeus is represented as at variance with justice. Yet we find Zeus seeking a mortal bride among the daughters of the men he had sought to destroy; nor is there any reason why, when he could crucify their champion, he should not have annihilated the whole race outright. Perhaps, however, we ought to conjecture that, at this point, the episode of Deucalion and his restoration of mankind after the deluge was understood to have intervened.

Other discrepancies may be stated briefly. In the elder version of the fable presented by Hesiod, Prometheus is almost identified with humanity, while some later fragments of the legend make him the father of Deucalion. In Æschylus he is an immortal god, whose sympathy with men proceeds from generosity and pity. Hesiod describes him as the

son of the Titan Iapetos by Asia. Æschylus places him in the first rank of Titanic agencies, by making him the son of Earth or Themis; he is married to Hesione, daughter of Oceanus. Hesiod names his brother, Epimetheus; and herein we trace the remnants of an antique psychological analysis, of which Æschylus has made no use. It is clear, therefore, that the Attic poet dealt freely with the mythus, and selected for artistic purposes only such points in the Hellenic fable as would fit the framework of his drama.

The only sure ground, amid so much that is both shifting and uncertain, is that the race of men had sinned against God, and that Prometheus was a responsible co-agent in their crime. This in itself is a strong argument in favour of the view which has been urged throughout this essay. This view may be resumed in the following positions. First, it is probable that the *Prometheus Bound* is only the second drama of a trilogy. Secondly, the vilification of Zeus as a despot must be understood in a dramatic sense; it was appropriate to the situation of the actors, and intended to enhance the pathos of the protagonist's suffering. Thirdly, if we possessed the trilogy entire, we should see that Prometheus had been really and gravely in the wrong, and that his obstinacy was in the highest sense tragic according to the Greek conception, inasmuch as it displayed the aberration of a sublime character. Fourthly, the occasion of a worthy reconciliation between Zeus and Prometheus, wherein the former should forego his anger and the latter bend the proud neck of his will, was furnished by Herakles, who held an intermediate position between God and men, and who was recognised as the redresser of wrongs and saviour by the Greeks at large.

J. A. S.

Monsieur Bedeau.

CHAPTER I.

THE streets of La Tour de Peilz—never very crowded at the best of times—were utterly empty. There was nobody lounging beside the low doorways; no head was to be seen thrust out between the rough wooden outside shutters that are half closed, all the summer through, to keep out the blazing sun; nor was a single semi-intoxicated peasant in sight stumbling along the dusty highroad that leads to Vevey. And La Tour de Peilz could scarcely give a more convincing proof of desertion than that.

Yes; you might have walked from one end of the village to the other and met never a soul, on that hot autumn day; for it was vintage time, and almost every man and boy in the place, and great part of the women too, had been hard at work, since the early morning, in the vineyards.

Looking up above the tiled roofs and the squat church-spire, with its mantle of ruddy Virginia-creeper, you might have seen them yonder on the hill-side, swarming among the green-leaved vines like bees in a flower-bed. And when, every now and then, a puff of wind swept down from the swelling hills, you might have caught some faint echo of the jests and laughter that were going on among the workers; for vintage time is a merry season in those parts, and the Vaudois, albeit a grave and sullen people in general, are at that time of the year given to indulge in jokes, which, if not refined, are at any rate not obscure, and in hilarity of which the heartiness may in some measure excuse the discordance.

There was not an adult inhabitant in the streets; but on the shores of the lake, down by the little port, a few broad-faced, plain-featured women were on their knees, washing linen and gossiping; pausing from time to time when the harsh, angry tones of a man's voice, which had been audible for some time, through the open window of a neighbouring house, in a steady, scolding monotone, took a louder and more indignant pitch.

"Ah, that poor Madame Honorez!" sighed one of them. "It is to-day that she will learn not to thwart M. Bedeau."

"And quite time, too," returned another. "She has escaped long enough. Have we not all passed a bad moment with him before now? And yet, I ask you, would any one of us have dared to set herself up against his will as she has done? She must learn her lesson, and M. Bedeau is the man to teach it her."

"Bah!" exclaimed fat Madame Bassy, throwing herself back from her stooping posture and sitting upon her heels, the better to get her

breath; "you make me sick with your servility, Charlotte Curdy. Who is this Bedeau, that we are all to bow down before him? After all he can't eat us—though I daresay he would if he could, the old Jew! If I were in Madame Honorez' place, I would say to him neither more nor less than this—'Be off with you, you old brute! Aren't you ashamed to speak like that to a poor widow with no husband to break your bones for your insolence? Go your way, and let me go mine. Do what you will with your own, and go about making everybody miserable, till it pleases *le bon Dieu* to remove you to wherever He may think fit to put you, but don't come asking *me* to help you. Why, if there was a man in La Tour who was not a coward, he would take you by your neck, and souse you in the lake! As for me, I spit upon you!'" And Madame Bassy, whose round face had become crimson with excitement roused by her own eloquence, concluded her speech with a resounding snap of her finger and thumb.

Madame Curdy glanced nervously over her shoulder, for, indeed, the tirade of the last speaker had been delivered in no subdued key, and M. Bedeau's ears were proverbially acute. "Ah, you speak at your ease," she said, with a sigh, as she bent down again over her washing, "you do not owe him money—you——"

"No, thank God! I don't," replied Madame Bassy, in the same loud, aggressive voice; "and wouldn't, so long as I could beg a crust of bread in the streets of Vevey. Ah, old miser!—old Jew!—old——"

She broke off suddenly, seeing a look of consternation in the faces of her friends, and wheeling round, found herself face to face with the subject of her complimentary remarks. A stout, thick-set, red-faced man of sixty or thereabouts, with close-cropped white hair, and busy, twinkling moon-eyes, under a frowning brow. He looked at Madame Bassy's flushed moon-face with a satirical smile, though he never ceased to frown.

"Rattle, rattle, rattle," he said. "A woman's tongue and an avalanche. A child can set either of them going, but the devil himself could not stop them. What do I care? I never did you any harm, Madame Bassy—but what do I care? You, Curdy!" he continued, with a swift turn in the direction of that trembling person, who was now scrubbing away at a ragged shirt with a great show of preoccupation, "where is your drunken pig of a husband, hey?"

Madame Curdy's pale face flushed a little, but she did not look up from her washing. "He is working with the vigneron, M. Bedeau," she said, sullenly.

"Aha, that is good! That brings in money; and when a man is in debt he should make haste to get money. Two thousand francs is a large sum, my good Charlotte, a very large sum for such as you."

"But not to you, M. Bedeau," said the woman, with a scared look. "Dear M. Bedeau, you will not be too hard upon us. I have saved two hundred and fifty francs, and soon it will be more. If you will consent to receive two hundred and fifty francs to begin with——"

"See here," interrupted M. Bedeau, roughly; "I do not want two hundred and fifty francs from you or anybody—what are two hundred and fifty francs to me? You owe me eight times two hundred and fifty francs, and that sum the law will help me to take from you, whenever I choose. Do you understand?"

"But, M. Bedeau, it was only a thousand francs at first, and if you will allow us——"

"What signifies what it was at first? It is two thousand francs now. I could turn you and your dog of a husband out into the streets without a rag to your backs, if I liked. Have I got you in my power, hey? Am I a man to offend, hey?"

Madame Curdy shivered, and made no answer.

"Listen to me," went on her persecutor. "Your husband, like the empty-headed, drunken sot he is, has offended me to-day. He has lent his boat to my son, that he might aid him in his folly and disobedience. Very good. He will not do so a second time. To-morrow I take that boat, and sell it. There is some news for you to give to Henri Curdy when he wakes up sober in the morning."

Madame Bassy was sitting on her heels, sniffing indignantly. The other women had stopped washing, and were listening to the dialogue with as much sympathy for the oppressed in their faces as they dared to show. Poor tremulous Charlotte Curdy took heart of grace, and, encouraged by the moral support of her companions, turned upon her tormentor like a wretched little half-starved cur upon a great bullying mastiff.

"You are a hard, cruel man," she began, in a shrill treble. "Why did you ever come to La Tour to ruin us all? Is it not enough that we must pay you double what you have lent us, but you must abuse and torment us every day, till we wish we had never been born? And what you say of my husband is not true. He never was a drunkard. From time to time, during the vintage, I do not say—but a drunkard, never! Poor man, where should he find the money to get drunk upon, and we so poor?" she added, with comical pathos. "And now you will take away our boat, and we shall be poorer than ever."

At which prospect Madame Curdy broke down, and burst into noisy weeping. Bedeau turned and walked away. He did not like to see women in tears; and with regard to this particular woman he had no intention of carrying out his threat. But he was a bully by nature, and could never resist attacking those who were afraid of him. On that morning, too, he was in a furious temper, and felt that he must fall upon somebody. So he had descended in his wrath upon Madame Honorez first, and then, finding, as by the special grace of Providence, this offending Charlotte Curdy in his very path, he had vented some of his superfluous rage on her. Having done so, he went away a trifle relieved, though still in much anger and vexation of spirit.

About twenty years before, this man Bedeau, then just left a widower,

had made his appearance in La Tour, with his only child, a boy of two years old, and had set up a small general shop in the village. Nobody knew anything about him except Pierre Honorez, who spoke of him as an old school-fellow, and who, up to that time, had kept the only shop of the same description in the place. It was at Pierre Honorez' that the villagers were accustomed to buy their candles, soap, calico, tobacco, and snuff; and it was thought not a little strange that any old friend of his should enter into competition with him where the field was so small. But the Honorez themselves did not seem to look upon the matter in this light.

Bedeau was for ever in their house; their children, Pierre and Suzanne, were inseparable from the little Jean; and in the evenings, when business was over and the shops closed, the rival dealers might generally be seen smoking an amicable pipe together before the door of one of their respective houses.

"Every man for himself," good, easy-going Honorez used to say. "I have my own *clientèle*—why should I wish to prevent another man from making money, if he can?"

Before very long the neighbours too fell in with this view. "A man is the best judge of his own affairs," they said. "*Le père* Honorez is getting old. Perhaps he has saved money, and does not care about making more." And soon this theory of Honorez having made his fortune became an acknowledged fact among the villagers, and one which they would not hear disputed without protestation, and even anger; for the truth was that many of them had begun to deal with Bedeau; and they had the grace to be somewhat ashamed of themselves, and to feel that they must put forward some reasonable excuse for their desertion of their old friend.

And yet, in their inmost hearts, they must have known that careless Pierre Honorez, with his muddle-headed way of managing his affairs, his good-natured aversion to press any man for his money, and his numerous bad debts, could scarcely have made a profit out of his small business, even before Bedeau set up in opposition to him. But in La Tour de Peilz, as in most other places, people are apt to think what suits best with their interest; and there could be no doubt that Bedeau's merchandise was better, newer, more varied, and even cheaper than Honorez'.

And then by degrees it came to be known that M. Bedeau was willing to advance small sums at a reasonable rate of interest; it being understood that those whom he obliged in this way were to deal exclusively with him for the future. Unhappy were the people who took advantage of this means of procuring ready cash. Bedeau's reasonable rate of interest turned out to be something very like twenty per cent. per annum; and every centime of this he would rigorously exact from his debtors; or—and this was what he preferred—he would keep them under his thumb, extracting small amounts from them, in part payment, when money was comparatively plentiful, and making use of them in fifty different ways, all

profitable to himself, when there was no prospect of their being able to pay up in full.

So it came to pass that, as the years went on, Bedeau got rich, while Honorez became poor. The latter still kept his shop open; but his customers were so few that it would not have been worth his while to renew his stock, even if he had had the necessary funds for so doing. But in truth he had no money now but what Bedeau chose to advance him. He was completely in his rival's power; and all the village knew it. There was no longer any pretence as to his having saved money, nor did he himself attempt to disguise that things had gone badly with him. Those who had left him in the beginning would gladly have returned to him now, had such a course been possible to them; but they also were, most of them, under the dominion of the money-lender, who was by this time a landed proprietor and the richest man in the place.

Oddly enough, as the gossips thought, this change of circumstances produced no diminution of the intimacy between the two families. Honorez always spoke of Bedeau as his best friend; nor could it be denied that that sharp practitioner appeared to have kept a soft corner in his flinty heart for the simple old man whom he had so remorselessly robbed of his means of subsistence. During Honorez' lifetime his family always lived in tolerable comfort; and when, stricken by sudden paralysis, he died, Bedeau astonished everybody by behaving with a generosity that no one would have expected of him, and which he certainly was never known to exhibit on any subsequent occasion.

Old Honorez, lying helpless and tongue-tied on his bed, had struggled hard to say something to his old school-fellow and creditor, but could not. Bedeau must have understood him, however, for he just touched the prostrate man's shoulder with his hand, saying, "*Ne craignez rien*;" and then, without further words or leave-taking, left the room.

Bedeau paid the expenses of the funeral, freely forgave the widow the heavy debt owing to him on the part of her late husband, and even allowed her to realise what small sum she could out of the sale of the stock. He did not, however, become himself a buyer, being a man who, though he might, upon occasion, give money away, could not bring himself to make a bad bargain.

Mdme. Honorez, a worn nervous woman, who feared the usurer more than any mortal, was quite overcome by this unexpected liberality. She went down on her knees to thank and bless the man who had achieved her husband's ruin. Then she sold her small property, hired the second floor of a house by the harbour, and there, partly by taking in washing, partly by working with her needle, managed to keep body and soul together, and avoid debt.

At this time Pierre Honorez was in his twentieth year, Jean Bedeau was eighteen, and Suzanne Honorez seventeen. The three of them had been brought up like children of the same parents, and as such they continued to live, spending all their spare time together, and seldom letting a

day pass without seeing one another. Pierre, however, had now but little spare time. He was a tall, muscular young fellow, hard-working and sober, earning enough by this time, as a vigneron and in other ways, to keep himself and give some aid to his mother, who often stood in great need of help.

Jean Bedeau, on the contrary, had more spare time than he knew what to do with; for though he might have employed himself—and indeed would have liked to do so—in his father's vineyards, that eccentric personage would never allow him to do a stroke of work. Himself a man who could not exist without unremitting labour of one kind or another, he was never so pleased as when he saw his son standing idly by while others toiled. "Jean does not need to work," he would say, with a grim smile of satisfaction; "his fortune is made." He encouraged the lad to dress in a style superior to that usually affected by persons of his station, and nourished I know not what vague dreams of seeing him, some day, the owner of a spick-and-span villa on the shores of the lake, and of a smart equipage.

Such a course of training would have been fatal to nine young men out of ten; but it did not prove so to Jean. He read a good deal, slipped off his coat and worked among the vines when his father was not by, and, for the rest, devoted a great part of his days to wandering about the country with Suzanne Honorez, a pretty, fair-haired, blue-eyed girl, who, for her part, found the happiness of her life in these long strolls. She would take her sewing with her and stitch away, sitting under the shade of some spreading chestnut-tree, while Jean lay on the grass beside her, and told her of the strange and beautiful things he had read of in his books.

That two young people thus circumstanced should fall in love with one another was not very extraordinary; but neither was it, perhaps, surprising that their parents should be altogether without suspicion as to the probability of such a result of their companionship. M^{me}. Honorez, anxious and troubled about many things, had scarcely yet given a thought to the fact that Suzanne was no longer a child; and even if she had done so, it would never have occurred to her to look upon Jean as anything but what she had for years been accustomed to regard him as—her children's brother. As for M. Bedeau, the idea that his son, for whose future he entertained such ambitious projects, could marry a pauper, and one who, as he had taught himself to believe, was his inferior in social standing, would have seemed to him so preposterous that any one who should have suggested such a thing to him would probably only have got laughed at for his pains. But a rude awakening was in store for this arbitrary gentleman.

There is in the outskirts of La Tour a deep *fossé*, which probably was in former times part of a moat surrounding the village; but which now, being a grassy place, and cool with the shade of walnut-trees, is as quiet and pleasant a spot for two lovers to loiter in as could be wished for.

Turning in here, one day, from the dusty high-road, with his note-book in his hand, and his pencil between his teeth, and being anxious to work out some calculation without fear of interruption, M. Bedeau became aware of a male and female figure pacing slowly under the trees before him. The man's right arm was round the girl's waist, her head was resting on his shoulder, and as they passed from light to shade and from shade to light again, M. Bedeau could see that he kissed her forehead more than once. It was a pretty picture enough, but Bedeau was not one who cared much about pictures. He grinned sardonically at the folly of the two unknown lovers, and returned to his accounts. But happening presently to glance up again, and catching sight of the young man's profile with the sun streaming full upon it, he gave vent to a sudden and unholy exclamation, and hurried after the pair.

M. Bedeau, in the course of business, had had occasion to cultivate the art of treading noiselessly. He now approached near enough to the delinquents to overhear a part of their conversation before they had had any warning of the presence of a third person. "We shall be rich when we are married, ma petite Suzanne," Jean was saying; "for my father is a wealthy man, you know; and then we shall cross the Alps, and see Venice and Florence and Rome, and all the beautiful places I have told you of. And when we come back, we will ——" The remainder of the programme remained unuttered, for at this juncture the speaker's arm was gripped tightly above the elbow from behind, and a strong hand made him perform an involuntary pirouette on his heels, and face to the right-about. There, within a few inches of his own, was his father's face, scarlet with passion and frowning savagely. Jean's heart leapt into his mouth, and then for an instant stood still. Suzanne gave a faint cry, and leant against the nearest tree.

Bedeau never looked at her, nor did he give utterance to a single word, good, bad, or indifferent; but keeping a firm hold on his son's arm, he pushed the young man before him, and marched off, at a sharp pace, out of the *fossé* and into the high-road. In the same somewhat ludicrous fashion he crossed the street, gained his own house, plunged through the dark shop, where the apprentices, who were measuring out calico for a couple of customers, stared open-mouthed, threw open the door of the sitting-room beyond, slammed it behind him, thrust Jean from him with a force that sent the lad staggering into an arm-chair on the other side of the room, and then, with his hands in his pockets and his back to the door, stood scowling at the astonished offender.

For a few moments there was silence. Then the father, as his habit was, burst into a storm of furious words:—"Have I been a good father to you, *vaurien*? Have I toiled and sweated and heaped up money that you might spend it, you ungrateful dog? Have I ever refused you anything? Have I clothed and fed you like a prince, and kept you in luxury and idleness, hey? Answer me!"

"Yes, father," faltered Jean.

"Then how dare you talk of marrying a beggar girl from the streets, and spending my money upon her? How dare you? Hold your tongue, you insolent rascal, and listen to me! You shall go to her to-morrow, and tell her that all this nonsense must end at once and for ever. Never let me hear a syllable of such rubbish again, or, as sure as you sit there, I will curse you and turn you out of my house. Do you hear?"

Jean rose slowly from the arm-chair. He was pale, and trembled a little; for he was a quiet, rather nervous lad, and he was afraid of his coarse, bullying father. But he had a will of his own, for all that.

"I cannot do what you wish," he said in a low voice.

"Cannot! *Parbleu*, you shall!" shouted the other. "Do you know that you have not a centime in the world but what I give you? Do you know that I can make you work for your daily bread, if I like? Do not drive me too far."

Jean spoke more clearly and firmly now. "I am very sorry, father," he said, "but you must do what you think best about that. As for me, I mean to marry Suzanne Honorez as soon as I shall have a home to offer her."

Bedeau positively reeled. For years past he had been so much in the habit of hectoring and browbeating everybody with whom he came in contact; he had become so accustomed to see people shrink and wince at the first tones of his rough, loud voice, that the spectacle of this pale-faced boy coolly defying him almost deprived him of his senses. For a moment he thought he would carry out his threat of cursing his son and turning him adrift. But it was only for a moment. In the whole wide world he had no single thing to love but this boy. For him, half consciously, half unconsciously, he had laboured all through the best years of his life; for him he had robbed and oppressed the poor, and had made himself hated far and wide. He had told nothing but the truth when he had spoken of toiling and sweating and heaping up money that Jean might spend it. And now if he should lose Jean, what good would his life be to him? He saw that he must use other means to gain his point. Bullying, it seemed, would not do here. With a great effort he commanded his passion, gulped down the words that were struggling to escape from his lips, and sat down beside the table, motioning to his son to take a chair opposite to him.

"*Voyons, mon garçon*," he said, "let us be reasonable. What you wish for is impossible. If ever you marry Suzanne Honorez, not another sou of my money shall you see. Be sure of that. But you are young and hot-headed; you do not know the world, nor what is best for your own happiness. There—I can make allowances—I have been young myself. See now; I will go to Madame Honorez myself, and tell her this thing is not to be—she will understand. For the rest, you are too young, much too young to think of marriage yet. Believe me, *mon garçon*, a wife may be taken at any time of life; and the later the better. Now I do not ask you to quarrel with the Honorez. Heaven forbid that we

should quarrel with our old friends! You shall walk, and row on the lake, and what you will with Pierre and Suzanne, just as of old. Only one thing you shall promise me—that never again will you speak to Suzanne of love or marriage. Come now; am I forgiving? Am I generous? I will not distrust you—I will not spy upon you; all I ask for is your word. Come!”

But Jean shook his head. He could only repeat what he had said before. He was very sorry; but he intended to marry Suzanne Honorez, sooner or later, and he could give no promise that he would refrain from speaking to her on the subject. Upon this his father broke into another tempest of indignation. A long and stormy discussion followed, during which each of the disputants arrived at a more clear appreciation of the other's strength of will; but in the end a compromise was agreed to. Jean gave his word that he would abstain from paying his addresses to Suzanne for the space of one year; and though the father would not admit that he could, under any circumstances, be brought to give his consent to such a marriage, he allowed it to be implied, by the very fact of his imposing a period of silence upon his son, that if Jean remained in the same mind at the expiration of the twelvemonth, he might be disposed at least to allow the matter to be discussed.

“Twelve months,” thought M. Bedeau, as he took his way down the narrow street leading to the port; “that is a long time. If I do not get that girl married before twelve months are over, I am a greater fool than people are kind enough to think me.”

He had recovered his equanimity, and was looking, for him, almost amiable, when he reached Madame Honorez' humble dwelling. He climbed the steep staircase, and rapped sharply with his stick on the second-floor door.

“*Entrez,*” said a rather tremulous voice.

M. Bedeau opened the door, and entered a scantily furnished, but scrupulously clean room. There was a bird singing in a cage beside the open window through which the sunshine streamed; there were flowers in pots on the sill; and beyond could be seen the deep blue lake and the dusky Savoy mountains on the opposite shore. Madame Honorez jumped up, letting her work fall on the floor, and stood twisting her fingers together nervously, as her visitor showed himself.

“Well,” said Bedeau, abruptly; for it was not in the nature of the man to be conciliatory to any living creature that was afraid of him—“I suppose you have heard all about it, hey?”

“Believe me, M. Bedeau,” began the poor woman, in great trepidation, “I knew nothing—I suspected nothing—till a few minutes ago. Heaven is my witness——”

“Yes, yes, yes,” interrupted Bedeau. “I know—I know. Is it likely that you, the widow of my old friend Honorez—to whom I venture to think that I have been of some service in my time—I say, is it likely that you would deliberately conspire to injure and insult me?”

"Oh, M. Bedeau!"

"It is all very well to throw up your hands, and say 'Oh, M. Bedeau!' but that does not alter the fact that our children have been making fools of themselves. Not that I blame you. I am perfectly assured that you have never dreamt of so impossible a match; and that being the case, let us talk things over amicably. My boy has given me his word that he will think no more upon this subject—at least not for a long time; and that you know is much the same as saying he will give it up. Youth is hot, my good Madame Honorez; but fickle—very fickle. Now you, upon your part, must make your girl understand that the matter is at an end. Do you see?"

Madame Honorez inclined her head.

"I regret that my son's folly should have caused her any annoyance; but she will soon forget it—soon forget it. Now, Madame Honorez, I am not so hard a man as I am made out to be. You yourself may have some cause to know this."

Madame Honorez bent down over her work. "You have been very generous, M. Bedeau," she said.

"I am always generous to those whom I respect," went on that unconscionable old Bedeau. "As to your daughter, who is, as far as I have observed, a modest and sensible young person, I wish you to understand that she shall lose nothing by this foolish affair. I interest myself in her future. It is I who charge myself with finding for her a suitable husband."

The air of affable condescension with which M. Bedeau made this gratifying announcement was too much for the patience of even poor, timid Madame Honorez. She became very angry; and though her dread of her formidable visitor was too great to allow her to put into words the thoughts that were passing in her mind, she did contrive to express some amount of indignation in her reply. "You are very good, M. Bedeau; but you are quite mistaken in thinking that Suzanne is in a hurry to get a husband. As to her marrying Jean, that, I know, is out of the question, and it is not I who would encourage her to listen to a man who approached her without his father's consent. But we want no suitors here (though it is very kind of you, M. Bedeau, to interest yourself about us). They will come soon enough, without doubt. It is not every man who looks for a large dot with his wife. But—you may believe me or not, as you please—the day of Suzanne's wedding will be a sad day for me."

M. Bedeau made a gesture of infinite disgust. "You women are all the same," he said. "I know you—I know you. You never wish your daughters to marry—oh, no! You never throw them in the way of young men who have money—you would be incapable of such a thing! But when you find that your child's happiness is at stake, then you weep, and give way. Is not that it?" And M. Bedeau grinned at his own wit. "Well, well," he resumed; "have it your own way. After all, what is it to me whether your daughter starves or not? Good morning to you."

And getting up abruptly, he left the room, slamming the door behind him. As soon as he was quite gone, Suzanne crept in from the adjoining room; and then the two women had a hearty cry together.

But it must not be supposed from the suddenness with which M. Bedeau had cut short his interview with the widow that he had in the least abandoned his project of getting Suzanne safely married before the year was out. On the contrary, he was more than ever determined that this matter should be speedily accomplished; nor did he entertain any doubt as to his success. Failure was a thing with which he had but slight acquaintance.

And so, from this time, began a drama in which the chief parts were played by the Bedeau and Honorez families—a drama which to lookers-on might have had a tolerably strong spice of the comic element, but which, to the principal personages concerned, was serious enough, and even tragic, at times.

The truth is, that Bedeau, sharp man of business and acute observer of his fellow-men as he was, was the worst diplomatist in the world in any matter where the feelings were concerned. He had studied human nature from one side only, and was now incapable of comprehending that man or woman could ever be actuated by any higher motive than that of self-interest. Basing all his calculations upon this assumption, he made so complete a fiasco of his plot for removing the obnoxious Suzanne from his son's path, that his worst enemies might have found some grain of pity for him. In his conversations with Jean he never alluded to the cause of disagreement between them, but he would dwell much upon the advantages secured to a man who married a woman of good position and connections, drawing, at the same time, a piteous picture of the fate of one who, depending upon his own manual labour for his daily bread, should take to wife a penniless maid. According to Bedeau, two terminations only were possible to the career of such an unfortunate—suicide or the gallows. To Suzanne, on the other hand, whom he now for the first time began to take notice of, this astute intriguer would often represent that the first duty of a girl who is unable to support herself is to marry a well-to-do man, and so be of use and assistance to her parents. Not, of course, a man dependent upon his father's bounty, nor one whom his relations did not wish to marry; but a kind-hearted, middle-aged man of tolerable means; such as M. Bertrand of Chexbres, for instance. And, by-the-by, was it not strange that M. Bertrand had never yet married?

Poor Suzanne used to listen to these harangues with dread, for she knew that each of them was the prelude to a formal visit from M. Bedeau, accompanied by a friend whom he would gravely present to her mother, and who, as it was immediately understood, was a candidate for her hand. In this manner M. Bertrand of Chexbres, M. Joly, the confectioner from Vevey, M. Guex of St. Saphorin, and many others were presented, made their wishes known to Madame Honorez, were humbly, but firmly rejected, and went their way, fuming and wrathful. Not one of these men would

have dreamt of seeking a bride in so obscure a spot as that where Madame Honorez had fixed her abode; but all were under obligations to Bedeau, and seeing that it might be dangerous to offend him, and that Suzanne was really a pretty and attractive girl, they consented to sacrifice themselves. But to be refused by "*une fille de rien*," as they politely termed her, was an affront for which they had not been prepared, and which they found it hard to swallow.

The suitors departed in anger, and Bedeau was as much puzzled as he was annoyed at the turn things were taking. In truth, he could hardly have adopted surer means to defeat his own object. All women, many men, and most children could have told him as much; but Bedeau was not given to asking counsel of others, nor did any one think of proffering him unasked advice.

By the end of the winter the net result of the unfortunate schemer's line of action was this:—Firstly, the boy-and-girl attachment between Jean and Suzanne, being strengthened by opposition, and inflamed, on the one side by the violent attacks of jealousy with which Jean was wont to be seized on the arrival of each fresh prétendant, and on the other by Suzanne's weariness of her persecutors and longing to confide her sorrows in her old playmate, ripened into a deep and lasting love. A love, too, that each recognised, in some sort, in the other; for though the lips may be silent the eyes can speak, and we may presume that Jean did not consider an eloquent glance, or even an occasional hand-pressure, as a violation of the promise he had made to his father. Secondly, the influential names of MM. Guex, Bertrand, Joly and the rest went to swell the already long list of M. Bedeau's enemies. Thirdly, the inhabitants of La Tour de Peilz were now in possession of the whole history of Jean's and Suzanne's love affair, and had been for some time watching with infinite glee M. Bedeau's abortive attempts to separate the young people. It is needless to say that the usurer got no sympathy from any member of the little community. Independently of the popularity that both of the lovers had acquired, by their universal unselfishness and readiness to help their neighbours, the hatred and fear of the old money-lender were so general and so strong that the mere fact of one of his designs being defeated was in itself sufficient to set the whole village chuckling with delight.

Thus it came about that, when the first warm days of April were melting the snows of the lower mountains, and the meadows of La Tour and Blonay were gay with crocuses and jonquils, M. Bedeau determined to try another plan. He would send Jean across the Alps, to Italy. The boy should visit Venice and Florence—even Rome and Naples also if he desired it. He should have plenty of money, and should travel like a gentleman. He should see the ruins, the statues, and the pictures of which he was wont to read so eagerly in the long winter evenings. And in this new and attractive world, among the Italian olive and orange groves—yes, and among the dark-eyed Italian women, too, thought M. Bedeau, with a short laugh—would he not soon forget the little fair-haired

beggar-girl he had left behind him? This scheme had suggested itself to M. Bedeau much earlier in the business, but he had hesitated, for two reasons, to put it into practice. In the first place, in spite of his wealth (and he was far richer than his neighbours imagined), he hated spending money. To him, capital laid out on a journey to Italy appeared to be absolutely unproductive. He would as soon have thrown his Napoleons into the lake as expended them on such a purpose. And then, odd as those who knew him best would have thought it, he shrank from parting with his son. Jean was his only companion, his only friend. When the boy should be gone, whom would he have to exchange a civil word with? What should he do with himself when his day's work was over?

But these objections must now, M. Bedeau felt, be overruled. The money, if it ensured the safety of Jean's future, would be well spent; and as for the separation—well, that also was a means to an end, and must be submitted to. So he made his proposition known to his son, by whom it was received with unmixed joy. Forbidden to speak to Suzanne upon the subject nearest to their hearts, and feeling sure enough of her fidelity to leave her without alarm, the lad was only too glad to seize upon any means of passing away the time till the long year of his enforced silence should be at an end. His adieux were soon made; and so it came to pass that M. Bedeau found himself standing, one fine morning, in the little station of La Tour, looking regretfully after the train that was bearing swiftly away all that made his life worth having. "He is glad to get rid of me," thought M. Bedeau, with a sigh. "Bah! who cares for anything but himself in this world?" Then he went back to his business, and bullied his debtors rather more than usual.

Long letters came to him from time to time, telling of the wonders in which Jean was revelling beyond the Alps; of the melting blue skies, of the wide, free Mediterranean, of the palm-trees of the Riviera, and who knows what other strange and beautiful sights. Long letters also reached the little house by the port, addressed to Mdle. Suzanne Honorez, and signed "*ton dévoué frère Jean*." For correspondence had not been forbidden to the young wanderer, to whom, indeed, his father had never once spoken on the all-important question of his marriage since their quarrel in the dingy *salon* six months before.

CHAPTER II.

THE summer came and went. The steamers that ply daily between Geneva and Villeneuve churned up the clear waters of the lake with their paddles, and defiled them with their cinders and bilge-water for five months, and then returned to their winter quarters again. The annual horde of tourists poured itself out upon the shores of Lake Lemman, filled its hotels and pensions, perambulated the streets of Vevey in eccentric costumes,

and took flight again with the approach of autumn, leaving only a few stragglers to try the effects of the grape cure, or seek an imaginary freedom from the rigours of the cold season under the sheltering hills of Montreux. The Dent du Midi put on its white winter mantle, and even the Dent de Jaman and the opposite mountains of Savoy were powdered with snow. The vines began to bend under their load of yellow grapes. But Jean did not return.

And now M. Bedeau recovered among the villagers that reputation for sagacity which the events of the previous winter had gone far to shake. "*Pas si bête, ce brave Bedeau,*" they said to one another. "Ah, he is a man who always arrives at his end sooner or later. Has he found a wife for Jean, think you?"

The women were sorry for Suzanne, and did not hesitate to express their sympathy when they met her hastening homewards in the evening from the dressmaker's at Vevey, where she sometimes got employment, or wandering, with her work in her hand, in the direction of the old moat—her favourite stroll ever since a certain day now nearly twelve months gone by. "*Courage, ma petite,*" they would say, patting her on the shoulder with their heavy hands; "no man is worth pining about. We shall dance at your wedding yet. And if the bridegroom is not Jean Bedeau, why it will be another. With your *beaux yeux*, lovers will not be wanting." For they were somewhat heavy-handed metaphorically as well as materially, though they meant kindly.

It puzzled these good dames not a little that Suzanne appeared to take her desertion with so much equanimity. She always turned off their well-intended condolences with a light laugh or a jest, declaring that she was quite content to remain for the present as she was; and though they spoke of pining, they could not but confess that the girl had never looked more pretty and blooming than she now did, nor less like a love-lorn maid.

Old Leroux, the "facteur," who delivered every week to Mdlle. Suzanne Honorez a bulky letter, addressed in a neat round hand, and bearing the Italian stamp, could, if he had chosen, have offered them an explanation of the phenomenon; but he was a discreet old man, and having received a hint from Suzanne, whom he had tossed in his arms when she was a baby, he held his peace.

Bedeau was radiant. Things had gone well with him that year. He had bought more vineyards, and had extracted more money from his debtors than he had calculated on; and he too had had his letters from Venice, where Jean now was, and where he was studying painting, an art for which he had always shown a great aptitude. Letters that contained no reference to the name of Honorez, nor any hint that the writer had another correspondent at La Tour, but which were full of glowing descriptions of the water-city and its churches and palaces, and—what gladdened the father's heart most—spoke of the speedy return of the wanderer.

In the vintage time Jean came back. He was taller, broader, and handsomer than when he had started on his travels, and he had gained, by

mixing with the world, an ease of manner and movement, and a readiness of speech that rejoiced his shrewd old father.

The evening of his son's arrival was as proud and happy a moment as had fallen to the lot of that friendless old man in the whole course of his life. All day long he had been fidgeting and fussing about the young man's room, setting things to rights, altering the position of a table or a chair half a dozen times before he could satisfy himself that the room was arranged as comfortably as it might be, and worrying his old servant, Marie, almost out of her senses with his reiterated injunctions to see that the sheets were properly aired. Towards evening he hurried out into the garden behind the house, and glancing to right and left to make sure that he was not observed, gathered hastily an immense bunch of dahlias, hollyhocks, and chrysanthemums. These he thrust into a jug, and placed on the dressing-table of the bedroom. "Artists like such things," he muttered to himself, half apologetically.

When the boy appeared, and he saw him standing in the little *salon*, strong, bronzed, healthy, and handsome, he was in a transport of delight. He could hardly eat his dinner for gazing at this young paragon; he drank his health over and over again, and clinked glasses with him across the table. Jean was touched, and perhaps also a little ashamed. "If only he does not ask me about Suzanne!" he thought. But this topic was, happily, not alluded to in the course of the evening. M. Bedeau smoked a pipe after dinner, and listened to the oft-told tale of Jean's experiences and adventures till sleep overpowered him. Then they went up to bed.

But after Jean had bade his father good-night, and was preparing to undress, the door was opened again, and the old man re-entered the room. He glanced round, and saw that the jug in which he had placed his huge bouquet was standing empty. In fact, Jean, who neither admired the taste displayed in the arrangement of the flowers, nor liked the heavy smell that emanated from them, had hastened to throw them out of the window, little knowing that he should hurt any one's feelings by so doing, and supposing, indeed, that they were a mark of attention from old Marie, who was not troubled with an over-sensitive organisation. M. Bedeau noticed their absence with a momentary pang, but he made no observation upon it.

"Have you all you want?" he asked.

"Everything, thank you, father," replied Jean.

"Ah, that is well." And M. Bedeau turned to go away. But presently he set down his candle on the chest of drawers and walked back. He put his hands upon his son's shoulders, and stood looking him full in the face, with an odd smile and a certain appearance about the eyes which Jean would have taken for tears, had not such a notion been too utterly preposterous. Perhaps the old man saw some look of astonishment in the lad's face, for he pushed him away suddenly and almost roughly, saying, "Go to bed—go to bed. It is late, and I must be up by sunrise." And so departed.

Very early in the morning, long before Jean was awake, M. Bedeau arose, and, stealing noiselessly past his son's door, with his boots in his hands, so as not to disturb the sleeper, went away to the vineyards, where his men were already at work. The day turned out unusually hot for the time of year. With blazing faces and streaming brows the vigneronns worked on, M. Bedeau superintending, and lending a hand himself, from time to time. He had half expected that Jean would have joined him in the course of the morning; but he came not, and M. Bedeau returned to his midday *déjeuner*, hot, weary, and a trifle dispirited.

On reaching his house he was met by old Marie, with the unwelcome intelligence that Jean had breakfasted and gone out, half an hour ago.

"Gone out!" said Bedeau, with a quick frown. "Where has he gone?"

"Monsieur Jean told me he was going to see the Honorez," replied the servant.

"Gone *where*? Gone to see *whom*, you grinning old she-baboon?" roared Bedeau, in a fury.

Long habit had hardened old Marie to the sound of such epithets, and she showed neither alarm nor irritation in her reply.

"What would you have?" she said. "It is right and natural that he should go and see his old friends."

"Mind your own business," snarled her master savagely, "and don't give your opinion till I ask for it."

Then he seized his hat, and without stopping to swallow a mouthful of his breakfast, hastened away towards the harbour. Turning a corner sharply, he ran against a little boy, whom he recognised as one of the numerous progeny of Curdy, the boatman, and who, after the manner of small boys, immediately asked him the time. Bedeau seized him by the ear.

"It is time for you to be in school, you little nest of fleas," he said, with graceful banter, nipping him with his thumb and forefinger nail.

"Oh! oh!" squealed the urchin. "Let me go, M. Bedeau, and I will tell you where Jean is."

"Well?" said Bedeau, loosing him at once.

"He is gone out in a boat with Suzanne Honorez," said the boy, with an infantine chuckle. "Papa has lent him ours, as he is working in the vineyards to-day."

M. Bedeau turned pale as he pushed him aside. He had suddenly recollected that it was the anniversary of the day on which he had found Jean and Suzanne together under the trees of the moat, and that the twelve-month of silence that he had imposed on his son was at an end. He raged on to Madame Honorez' house, and into her quiet room, where the weary, harassed woman was working alone by the window, he burst in like a bomb-shell. Almost mad with anger, disappointment, and mortification, he heaped upon her a torrent of reproaches, menaces, and accusations, embellished with such oaths and such a wealth of vituperation as she had never before heard from his lips. He declared that she had

plotted and conspired to rob him of his son and his money ; that she was a perjurer, a thief, and I know not what besides ; but he swore that she should reap the just reward of her iniquities. He would claim the debts owing to him by her late husband ; he would turn her and her children out to beg their bread in the streets ; and he would cut off Jean with a franc, and never see him again.

So he railed on, adding reproach to reproach and epithet to epithet, till Madame Honorez, terrified and bewildered, doubted whether the man were not drunk or insane. Not till he was compelled to pause from sheer exhaustion did she get a chance of giving her version of the escapade that had so enraged him. Jean had met her and her daughter at the door, it appeared, and there she had left the young couple, having, as usual, work to do, and no time to waste in chattering. She had supposed that they were still where she had quitted them, till little Baptiste Curdy (the same child that Bedeau had met in the street) had come in with a message for her that Jean and Suzanne had gone out for a sail on the lake. She protested that she would not have allowed this had the project been broached in her presence, and she defended herself as best she could against the charge of having tried to inveigle Jean into marrying her daughter ; but Bedeau would hear no excuses. He repeated his threats, gave vent to a fresh outbreak of wrath, and when he had reduced Mme. Honorez to hysterical weeping, at last took himself off, a little calmed. At the door he espied Charlotte Curdy, and relieved his feelings by attacking her in the manner already described. Then, with his hands thrust into his pockets and his head bent down, he slowly took his way homewards.

He sat down before the untouched breakfast-table, and tried to eat, but could not. He swallowed a couple of glasses of wine and a few mouthfuls of bread, and then gave it up. The revulsion of feeling from the inordinate happiness of yesterday, the disappointment, and, most of all, the conviction that his son had deliberately deceived him, turned his food bitter, and made him feel that the world was all against him. "*Il m'a trompé—il m'a trompé,*" he muttered over and over again, as he sat with his head in his hands and the uneaten breakfast before him.

In this position he remained for nearly an hour, and might have remained so longer, but for the entrance of Marie, who came in to clear the table. He jumped up when she appeared, and went out into the garden, not wishing to be pestered by the inquiries that he knew his old servant would make as to the reason of his abstinence. He paced up and down the gravel walk, under the scorching sun, till he saw, through the open window, that the room was once more empty. Then he returned to his high-backed wooden arm-chair, and sat there, staring at vacancy, with his hands dropped idly by his sides, thinking, in a dazed, confused way, how cruelly the world was treating him. All his well-laid schemes frustrated ; the labour of his life rendered useless ; his will set at naught ; and his old age like to be passed in solitude and estrangement from the only

thing that he loved on earth—truly it was a hard destiny. M. Bedeau understood no language but his own, and had never heard of Hood; but the refrain that was ringing in his head, all through his dreary meditations, that afternoon, was always that sad one—"What can an old man do but die?" Yes; the sooner he was shovelled under the ground and forgotten the better, he thought bitterly. Then Jean would marry the beggar-girl, and everybody would be happy. Consent to this match he never would, as long as he lived; but he was getting old—it would soon be all over now; and everybody would be glad. Not a man or woman of his acquaintance but bated him; even his boy had no love for him; he had been glad to go away; he had shown no joy on his return; last night he had thrown away the flowers that his old father had gathered for him. What could an old man do but die? And now two tears found their way into M. Bedeau's blood-shot eyes, quivered on his eyelids and trickled slowly down his rough cheeks, falling on the front of his coat.

It was rather a maudlin exhibition perhaps; but the truth was that M. Bedeau was not quite himself, that day. He had been over-excited the evening before; he had stood too long in the sun before noon; he had put himself into a violent passion, and he had eaten nothing but a crust of bread since sunrise. No wonder that his nerves were a little upset.

He never moved from his chair, and scarcely changed his position till the sudden slamming of the window and the banging of an outside shutter in a furious blast of wind roused him with a start. The unnatural heat of the day had culminated in a thunder-storm. Columns of dust were swirling along the road; the thunder was growling over the hills, and a few heavy drops of rain were beginning to fall. M. Bedeau looked at his watch, and saw, to his astonishment, that it was past five o'clock. He went to the window, fastened back the shutter, and looked out. The Savoy mountains were shrouded in heavy black clouds; a veil of rain blurred the outlines of the lower hills; and between the houses that separated his garden from the shore, he could catch a glimpse of the lake, all covered with white waves. M. Bedeau remembered, with a thrill of alarm, that his son might yet be out upon those stormy waters. With this new anxiety possessing all his mind, and excluding from it the recollection of his other troubles, he took his hat, and paying no attention to the rain that was now descending heavily, hastened, for the second time that day, towards the little port.

Meanwhile, M. Bedeau was not the only person whom the change in the weather had perturbed.

Madame Curdy had soon recovered herself, after the departure of her dreaded creditor. Consoled by her friends, and comforted by the consciousness of having for once had the courage to give the formidable Bedeau a bit of her mind, she dried her tears and returned to her washing, trusting that that terrible threat as to the sale of her husband's boat might not, after all, be carried into execution.

"Madame Bassy kept up her courage with brave words. "You were too gentle with him, Charlotte," she said. "You should have made his ears tingle more for him when once you had begun. To call a respectable woman's husband a drunkard indeed! Not that I, for my part, think anything of a man who cannot drink his bottle or two of wine once in a way; but to call poor Curdy a drunkard! If he had said such a thing of my husband, *ma foi*! I should have been capable of answering him with a *soufflet*."

"And to demand two thousand francs where he has lent but one!" chimed in another woman. "It is unheard of! it is infamous! Tell me, my good Charlotte, does he always charge at that rate?"

"Eh, how should I know?" said Madame Curdy, raising a storm of soapbuds round her in her indignation. "It is as I told you. He lent us a thousand francs, and now it seems that we must pay two. That is the law, they say. I never could understand figures myself; and you know what sort of a head Henri has on his shoulders."

"It is a robbery," said Madame Bassy, solemnly. "Neither more nor less than that. And if I were in your place, Charlotte Curdy, I would as soon tell him so as not."

And so they went on, one backing up the other, and all displaying that valour against an absent enemy which is to be met with not in La Tour alone. The conclave was broken up by the appearance on the scene of a round-shouldered middle-aged man in a woollen night-cap, who came slouching towards the women over the broken ground that lies about the port.

"*Tiens!* it is Henri Curdy," said Madame Bassy. "What can have brought him away from the vineyards so early?"

"*Dites donc,*" said Curdy, as soon as he got within speaking distance; "has young Jean Bedeau brought my boat back yet?"

"No," replied his wife. "Why do you lend the boat without charging for its hire? When people get what they want for nothing, they are not in a hurry to give it back again."

"They will be home soon," said good-natured Madame Bassy. "The time passes quicker for young lovers than for us old folks."

Henri Curdy drew his hand thoughtfully over his unshaven upper lip and chin. "It is that we are going to have a storm," he said. "With these light boats misfortunes easily happen. I cannot afford to lose my boat. Newly painted last spring, too!"

"Curdy, I am ashamed of you," said Madame Bassy. "How can you think about your boat if those two innocent children are in danger—which Heaven forbid!"

Curdy made no reply. He was shading his eyes with his hand, and looking out intently over the lake to see whether he could discover any sign of his boat. Not a sail was in sight.

"Let us hope they may have landed somewhere," he said; "the storm will be upon us directly."

Almost as he spoke, the first gust came. With a sudden rush and

swoop it set the women's petticoats fluttering, and the clothes they had hung up to dry flapping with a noise like musketry. There was a vivid flash of lightning over the opposite mountains, a rattling peal of thunder, and then all was still again for a moment. A black curtain of cloud and rain had descended upon the Savoy shore, against which the tossing waves of the lake, lit up by a ray of sunlight, were seen with a weird clearness, till the next gust, hurrying the storm before it, hid both lake and land in a deluge of driving rain. That brief glimpse, however, had sufficed to enable Madame Bassy to see, or fancy she saw, a white sail in the far distance, against the inky background. She paled a little and compressed her lips, but, like a wise woman, refrained from speaking, knowing that there could be no good in her doing so.

And now a trembling, fluttering figure came out into the wind and rain, struggling with a huge, unwieldy umbrella, and joined the little group. It was Madame Honorez, who asked of each one, in a piteous, distracted way, whether they knew anything of where Suzanne was, and then, without waiting for a reply, hurried to put the same useless question to the next. She had passed a miserable, anxious afternoon, tormenting herself with fears lest M. Bedeau should carry out any of his wild menaces, and doubts as to whether she had not been much to blame in leaving the young people alone together. As the hours went on, and her daughter did not return, she became more and more restless and troubled; and when the storm burst over the lake, she had stood by the window, muttering prayers and wringing her hands, till she could bear the solitude no longer, and went out to join the women on the shore, less with any hope of obtaining comfort from them than because it had come to be a necessity for her to pour out her grief and alarm into the ear of some sympathising fellow mortal.

Such a one she found in Madame Bassy, who, though greatly distressed and apprehensive herself, had her wits sufficiently about her to make light of the mother's anxiety.

"Drowned!" she exclaimed, forcing out a semblance of one of her usual jolly laughs. "That is a good joke! It is Jean Bedeau who will be angry when he comes back, and hears of what you have thought him capable! Do you think he knows so little of the lake as to remain afloat in a storm which, as every one might have seen, has been coming up for the last hour?"

"But it seemed to me to come up in five minutes," faltered Madame Honorez.

"That is because you were not looking out for it."

"But indeed yes; I had been sitting by the window, watching for them, since three o'clock."

"With your back to the storm. Yes, yes; one has not eyes in the back of one's head, worse luck! Dear me! if I could see what my children were doing behind my back, I should not have had my china broken so often, nor my curtains set fire to—and that, if you will believe

me, has happened to me twice this year. Ah, those children! I often say to Bassy that they are more trouble than they are worth. How fortunate you are to have but two; and they grown up, and beyond doing mischief, as one may say."

"But, Madame Bassy," interrupted the other, "you did not see the storm yourself till it was just upon us. I saw you talking to Charlotte Curdy up to the last moment."

"Bah! I had my washing to attend to; and you know what Charlotte Curdy is; when once she begins to talk there is no stopping her. I had other things to do than to look at the weather. Fear nothing, my good Madame Honorez. I would bet a good deal that Jean and Suzanne are sitting snugly together under shelter, watching the storm, while we, like the imbeciles that we are, are standing here, getting soaked to our bones."

But for all that, Madame Bassy continued to peer anxiously into the rain, though it was impossible for the keenest eyes to distinguish any object at a distance of more than fifty yards from the shore.

Gradually a few more stragglers were added to the little knot of watchers; for the rumour that a boat was out in the tempest had spread through the village, as such rumours do, and the workers in the vineyards, who had been driven down by the weather, had heard this news on their return home.

So they stood there on the beach, amid the driving spray and rain, and talked together in a low voice, glancing from time to time at the spare, black-draped form of Madame Honorez, and at stout Madame Bassy, who was doing her best to cheer and comfort her.

Presently a new comer was seen hastily approaching, and some one said, "*Tiens!* it is M. Bedeau." M. Bedeau it was; but looking so strange and altered that he was barely recognisable. His face, usually so florid, had taken a dull, leaden hue; his step was uncertain, and his voice, when he addressed Curdy, whom he immediately sought out, had an odd thickness in it very unlike his ordinary rough, loud tones.

"Where is the boat?" he asked.

"Eh, M. Bedeau, who knows?" answered Curdy, with a desponding shrug of the shoulders.

"They have not returned then?"

"Alas! no. If only they have had the sense to land somewhere!"

"That is not likely. Have you a telescope?"

"No, M. Bedeau."

"Then be so kind as to go to my house, and ask Marie for mine. I am too tired to go myself. I will sit down here, and wait for you." And M. Bedeau seated himself on a broad, flat stone as he spoke.

Curdy shambled away to do his errand, muttering to himself as he went: "Aha! trouble makes us wonderfully polite. 'Be so kind' indeed! Yesterday it would have been, 'Curdy, you dog, go and get my telescope, and be quick about it!' Ah, well! I will get your glass for you, M. Bedeau; but it is little you will see through it, even when the rain

clears off. *Satane orage !* I shall never see my boat again !—and fresh painted too !”

Bedeau sat down in the pouring rain, with his hands before him, and a look of dull despair in his face that might have softened the hearts of his bitterest enemies, one would have thought. But no one pitied him much, or found a kind word to say to him. He had gone too far with them for that ; and indeed the Vandois are neither a tender-hearted nor a forgiving people. Only fat Mdme. Bassy could not bear to see her old antagonist so pitiably cast down ; and leaving her special charge, Mdme. Honorez, for a moment, came and stood beside the stricken man.

“ *Allons, M. Bedeau, du courage !*” she said kindly, laying her hand on his shoulder. “ One must not meet trouble half way.”

“ He looked up at her vacantly, frowning a little, as if painfully striving to collect his scattered senses. “ It is Mdme. Bassy, is it not ?” he said, in the same thick, uncertain voice.

“ At your service, M. Bedeau.”

“ Ah ! You are a good woman. Do you ever pray ?”

“ But certainly, M. Bedeau.”

“ Pray now. Perhaps God will hear you—I don’t think He would hear me. Besides, I cannot find the words—the words will not come.”

Mdme. Bassy looked at him curiously. Then she said gently : “ You are not well, M. Bedeau. See now ; go home and put your feet in hot water ; you have taken a chill. Why should you stay here ? I will run and let you know as soon as we have news. Come.” And she held out her hand to assist him to rise.

But Bedeau made no movement. “ Thank you,” he said ; “ but I shall do very well where I am. I want to speak to my boy when he lands. I have something to say to him. Go to her,” he continued, pointing to Mdme. Honorez ; “ and tell her to pray too. It is all that we can do.”

The storm passed away as rapidly as it had come. In another five minutes the clouds had rolled away, and the thunder was rumbling over the distant Velan and Combin Mountains. The setting sun streamed out upon the troubled lake and the opposite shore, and the wind dropped to a fresh breeze.

And now Curdy returned, bringing the telescope with him. M. Bedeau took it, with a nod of thanks, and lifted it to his eye. But his hand shook so that he could distinguish nothing through it. After several fruitless attempts, he laid it down, and looked despairingly round for some one to help him. Seeing Curdy close by, he begged him to take the glass, and look if there were a sail in sight.

“ One has no need of a telescope for that, M. Bedeau,” said the boatman. “ There is not a boat on the lake.”

“ Look, all the same,” replied the old man ; and to humour him, Curdy looked. For a few moments he saw nothing but the rolling waves and the sunlight that danced upon them ; but presently he dropped the

glass, with a cry, and flung up his hands. "*Juste ciel!* they are lost!" he exclaimed. He had seen a boat floating bottom upwards, rising and falling with the waves, near the Savoy shore, and had recognised it for his own. A scene of confusion and consternation followed. The women, weeping and lamenting, surrounded M^{me}. Honorez, who had broken into hysterical sobs, and led her away homewards, while the men crowded round Curdy, and looked in turn through the telescope, that they might see for themselves whether it were indeed his boat that had been swamped by the waves. Alas! there was no room for doubt. All recognised the colour of the paint, and even the letters H. C. could be made out upon the bow. It was but too certain that the unhappy lovers had been overtaken by the storm, and drowned.

Not till some minutes had elapsed did any one think of M. Bedeau. Then they turned round, and saw that he was lying prostrate beside the stone on which he had been sitting. Some of the men ran and fetched a shutter. The lifted him on to it, breathing heavily, but quite unconscious, and bore him away to the house which he had left, that morning, a hale and hearty man.

M^{me}. Honorez' grief took a less alarming, but for the time more distressing form to witness. When they got her home, she went from one fit of hysterics into another, making the house ring with her cries, and shrieking, in her despair, that she would go and drown herself too. The women who had followed her into the small room were of no assistance, and indeed only made matters worse with their lamentations. M^{me}. Bassy, the only collected one among them, had some difficulty in getting rid of these intruders, who took that inexplicable pleasure in the painful scene that seems common among women of their class; but at length they were induced to withdraw; and then the violence of the unhappy woman's misery wore itself out by degrees.

M^{me}. Bassy, like a sensible woman as she was, made no effort at consolation or condolence: but she persuaded the bereaved mother to lie down on the bed, and began to look after her physical comforts, bathing her face and hands, and preparing for her a *tisane*, supposed to be possessed of great calming properties. Then she set to work to tidy the room, and put things in their places, while M^{me}. Honorez turned her face to the wall and moaned.

Pierre, who had returned from his work with the other vigneron, had rowed out in a boat to the supposed scene of the disaster, without any well-defined object in so doing, save that inaction was impossible to him, and that bodily fatigue is ever the best remedy for mental suffering.

But now, while Madame Bassy was still busy with her dusting and tidying, and just after she had lighted the one candle that Madame Honorez' limited means permitted her to use, that excellent woman received a shock which she will remember to the last day of her life. For, turning round on hearing a slight noise behind her, she saw that the door was open, and in the dark passage beyond, with the flickering light

upon their faces, stood the wraiths of Jean and Suzanne, hand in hand. Madame Bassy stood spell-bound and open-mouthed, too terrified to stir or speak. But now the two figures advanced slowly into the room, and when Jean said, "Madame Bassy!" she realised that these were no apparitions, but indeed the two lost ones themselves, safe and sound. Then, with a loud, joyful cry, she flew at the young man, and fairly embraced and hugged him, bursting into sobs for the first time that day. Madame Honorez and Suzanne were already in each other's arms; and between the three women more tears were now shed over the safety of the lovers than had fallen over their supposed loss.

It was long before Jean could get a hearing, nor was he allowed to get through his story without many interruptions, ejaculations, and tearful outbreaks. His tale, briefly stated, was this.

Suzanne and he had sailed away in the sunshine, as happy a pair of lovers, considering the obstacles in the way of their union, as could have been found in all Switzerland. Talking over their prospects, exchanging vows of eternal fidelity, and relating to each other their mutual experiences during the year of their quasi estrangement, they had taken no heed of time, and had been considerably astonished to find themselves, about four o'clock, close to the shores of Savoy. Suzanne was for returning at once; but Jean, who truly said that it might be long before they had another day alone together, had little difficulty in persuading her to land at St. Gingolph, and stroll through the groves of Spanish chestnuts that surround that little village. Thus an hour had slipped away; and then, after refreshing themselves with a light repast of bread and *vin du pays*, they had set out on their return voyage. Scarcely had they got clear of the port when they had seen the storm rushing down upon them with frightful rapidity. Jean had at once turned the boat's head for the shore, hoping that they might yet reach land in time; but it was too late. How the accident had happened neither of them could say. All they knew was that on a sudden they found themselves struggling in the water, the wind roaring past them, the boat capsized at a short distance, and darkness and rain all around. Fortunately Jean was a good swimmer, and Suzanne also, unlike most girls of her class, had had practice enough to enable her to keep herself afloat for a short time. Weighed down, however, by her heavy clothes, it is doubtful whether, even with Jean's assistance, she could have been saved, had not the latter managed to secure one of the oars, which came floating towards them, and to support himself and his companion upon it till some boatmen from St. Gingolph, who had seen the catastrophe, put out, and picked them up. The good Savoyards had received them with great kindness, had lent them clothes, and had then driven them, in a country cart, to Villeneuve, where they had taken the train to La Tour.

Madame Bassy, now recovered from her first emotion, did not fail to administer to both the culprits—and especially to Jean—the scolding which she conceived that their conduct merited.

"Is it worth while," she exclaimed, "to bring up children, and work and struggle for them, that they may play one such tricks as this? Suzanne, wicked girl! you have gone near to kill your mother by your thoughtlessness. Jean, you are no better than an ingrate! If you had seen the face of that poor M. Bedeau when he was sitting there in the rain, looking for you and your boat, and seeing nothing! He will never be the same man again—it is I who tell you so. God forgive me!" she ejaculated; "I had almost forgotten him. Come, Jean; come quickly." And without more ado, she seized the young man by the arm, and hurried him down the staircase, and along the street, towards his father's house.

Jean hung his head rather shamefacedly. In honest truth, he had not supposed that his father would have felt much anxiety at his non-appearance. M. Bedeau had never been a man given to nervousness or easily alarmed; nor had it occurred to either of the delinquents that their absence would have frightened anybody except Madame Honorez, whom they had imagined to be the only person acquainted with the fact of their being upon the lake. But when Madame Bassy described to him the scene by the port during the storm, the young man began to feel that he had been to blame.

On the threshold they were met by the doctor, who, at the sight of Jean, started back in almost as great astonishment and alarm as Madame Bassy had manifested. The latter gave a short account of the adventure that had befallen the two young people, and ended by expressing a hope that the presence of M. le docteur did not portend any illness of M. Bedeau. For she had been too much occupied with Madame Honorez to notice what had happened after Curdy had announced the accident.

"Yes," said the doctor gravely, "I am sorry to say that M. Bedeau is ill."

"I expected as much," said Madame Bassy. "Did I not tell him, this afternoon, that he had taken a chill? Well, well, here is the best medicine for him," she added, clapping Jean on the shoulder.

The doctor shook his head. "I am afraid you come too late," he said.

Jean staggered back against the door-post. "What do you mean?" he stammered. "Is he—is he dead?"

"He is not dead," replied the doctor; "but I can give you no hope of his recovery. He has had a seizure; and one side is completely paralyzed. You can go to him, if you will. The sight of you can do him no harm now. I fear I cannot be of any further use; but if you want me I shall be at your disposition." And the doctor took his broad-leaved straw hat, and walked away, leaving Jean overcome with grief and remorse.

These events occurred some years since; and Jean, now married to the girl of his choice, and the father of a family, is held to be one of the happiest men in the Canton de Vaud; but he has never forgiven himself

for being the cause of his father's death, and is an older and graver man than one of his years should be.

M. Bedeau never spoke again, after his seizure ; but he lingered for twenty-four hours ; he knew his son, and was able to press his hand. On the second day he was restless and uneasy, evidently having some want that those about him were unable to supply. It was Madame Bassy who suggested that Suzanne should be taken into the room. The girl advanced, trembling, to the bedside of the dying man, who took her hand and looked round for Jean. When his son came forward, he opened his hand, and pressed those of the two young people together. Then he made signs for Jean to kiss him, and they understood that he wished Suzanne to do the same. After that, he closed his eyes, and died, towards evening, without pain or struggle.

It was found that he had bequeathed all his property (a much larger one than had been anticipated) to his son, with the exception of some handsome legacies to several of his principal debtors, who, as may be supposed, were much astonished at this unexpected windfall.

The worthy Vandois, who love money above everything, have forgiven M. Bedeau all the offences of his lifetime in consideration of this tardy liberality, and now speak of him as a public and private benefactor.

Over his grave in the churchyard of La Tour, Jean has had a handsome monument erected, bearing a lengthy inscription, of which one sentence, at least, may claim to be fairly truthful—"He was a fond and devoted father."

The Building of the Bridge: a Chinese Legend.

CHAPTER I.

It is necessary to explain that the bridge referred to is the longest bridge in China; it spans the river Min, which flows into the sea near the picturesque port of Foochow—a place well known to tea merchants, and from the dialect of which district our English word *tea* is derived. The value of the tale consists in the insight it affords into the curiously grotesque character of the Chinese imagination, when brought to bear upon objects the origin of which appears too magnificent to have been produced without supernatural agency. I need scarcely add that the tale as given below is in no way a translation. It is simply impossible to keep up the interest in a literally translated Chinese story; and the only feasible plan is to dress up the details in one's own words, while adhering strictly to the facts as narrated in the original.—H. E. W.

FAR down in the depths of the river Min the water devils were holding high carnival; these devils—the spirits of unhappy beings who had from time to time been drowned in endeavouring to cross the turbulent waters of the stream, and whose subsequent existence had ever since been one monotonous routine of irksome confinement—had at length had their horizon gladdened with a ray of hope. It was rumoured amongst them that the next day a large sailing-vessel, crowded with passengers, was going to attempt the passage of the river, and the devils well knew how fraught with danger that undertaking was. However calmly the day might dawn, the probabilities were that ere its close a storm would arise; and the devils were aware, from painful experience, that few boats could live through a storm on those waters. And once let the vessel founder, and the passengers be drowned, and the happy moment of their deliverance was come; for, for each man that was drowned, one of the spirits would be restored to the upper earth, and his unenviable vacancy be supplied by one of the freshly drowned victims.

"They *must* be drowned," cried one of them; "this is the worst time of the year—it is always blowing a gale at this season; and is to-morrow likely to be the day of all days on which it will be calm? No! and if it isn't, why, I know of some one who won't shed tears of sorrow."

"Oh, they will attempt it sure enough," rejoined another; "there are numbers of people who have been wanting to cross for a long time,

and they are certain to think that it will not blow just for that one particular day."

"Well, I shall take care not to cross it again when I get to the top," said a third; "I've had enough of this kind of life, and I intend to stick to the shore in future."

And so they went on dreaming of what they would do when they got to the top, and exulting in the prospect of transferring their miseries to the new arrivals.

It was not, however, so certain as they thought. There are other spirits besides devils, and some of these spirits watch over the lives of frail mortals on earth. That night one of them appeared in a dream to the captain of the boat, and told him to enquire among the passengers for one named A Choi. If he was on board, all would be well; if not, the boat would be lost. A Choi was described as a person of great literary attainments, and naturally therefore would be easily distinguishable from the other passengers, who were almost invariably in these passages of the lower and uneducated classes.

The next day the sun rose cheerfully over the river Min; the wide expanse of the stream was lighted up with gold-gleaming rays, and the passengers, as they stepped on board the boat that was to take them across, were in the highest spirits imaginable. The captain alone seemed anxious, and he carefully scanned the appearance of each one that came on board. At length the number was complete, and it became evident that there were no more to be expected. As this became apparent the captain's face perceptibly lengthened. There was not one of the passengers whose appearance could possibly be mistaken for that of a literary man of even small pretensions, and A Choi had been described to him as one of very remarkable literary attainments. To settle the matter, however, he determined to enquire if there was on board anyone named A Choi. No, there was no one of that name. One woman only explained that she was married to a man named A Choi; but that would not do, especially when, in answer to the captain, who vaguely hoped that possibly her husband might be the literary man referred to, she replied that her husband was nothing but a poor farmer, and could not even read or write. All that the captain could now do was to hope that his dream might prove false. This he was the more inclined to do as, apart from the extreme unreliableness of midnight visions, the exceptional fineness of the morning seemed to preclude all possibility of a storm.

The hopes founded on the appearance of the sky proved, alas! only too delusive; the boat had scarcely proceeded on its course, when the little clouds that up to this time had been wandering promiscuously over the heavens, were seen suddenly to marshal themselves into a compact body, and to assume the shape of a gathering storm. The captain's heart sunk low within him as he saw this change, but he still thought it possible that he might get across before the storm came, and he eagerly took advantage of the freshening breeze to put on more sail, trusting that the

increased speed of the boat would get them over before the wind became too violent to admit of the use of sails. The rapidity, however, with which a gale once brewing culminates in these parts is well nigh incredible, and it was but a very short interval after the change recorded that the wind was blowing with great and increasing fury.

The passengers, whose ignorance of navigation only added to their alarm, were rapidly becoming panic-stricken, when the captain, perceiving that nothing short of a miracle could now save them, once more loudly demanded whether anyone of great literary attainments and named A Choi was on board. Even in this moment of distress more than one passenger laughed aloud at the question, so ridiculous did the idea seem of anyone of that crowd being literary, and once again they all replied, "No one." "Then are we lost," said the captain, and he thereupon told them his dream of the previous night. No sooner had he done so than the confusion on board became indescribable. The passengers lost all self-control, and became completely demoralised. And how could they help it, when the captain himself had told them that there was no hope? It was in a weak moment that he gave way, and he had scarcely let the words escape from his mouth than he felt how indiscreet and imprudent he had been; but nothing that he could do or say now could recover their lost confidence in him, and it would be useless to attempt to describe the utter demoralisation of the passengers and crew. Suffice it to say that, what with the men struggling and fighting amongst themselves, the women shrieking and tearing their hair, and the children screaming and kicking, the fury of the storm itself seemed almost a minor evil to the passions that the captain had so weakly let loose.

Was it inspiration, or what was it, that caused one of the passengers in this extremity of distress to turn his eyes upon the woman who had described herself as the wife of A Choi? Whatever it was, that glance saved the ship; for no sooner had he looked than an idea struck him. "Pray for us!" he cried; "your husband is not literary, but your son may one day be so."

In an instant the woman fell upon her knees, and, in as loud a voice as her terror would allow, prayed to Heaven and Earth in these words: "If we are spared this day, and I live to bring forth a son, in his name I vow to build a bridge over this river."

Scarcely were the words out of her mouth, than, like an angry child, whose passionate sobs the skilful nurse has managed to arrest at their very height, instantaneously the wind became calm and the storm ceased.

Nothing could exceed the delight of the passengers at this unlooked-for change; scarcely able to believe their own eyes at first, they gradually became reassured as the clouds dispersed and the sun came out, and they now crowded round the woman with joyful congratulations. She, for her part, was so astonished at the result of her prayer, that she was like one bewildered, and received the noisy congratulations of her fellow-voyagers as though she heard them not. And in this state of semi-intoxicated

delight they passed the rest of the day, and at length arrived safely at the other side of the river. Here they all separated, though not without each of them in turn taking leave of the poor ragged woman whose prayer had saved their lives and disappointed the devils of their prey. As to the devils themselves, it would take too long to describe their sensations on finding themselves balked; we must at once pass on to relate in what manner the woman fulfilled her vow to build a bridge across the river Min.

CHAPTER II.

It was not very long after the incidents recorded in the last chapter that the woman gave birth to the son whose arrival she had ever since been looking forward to with the keenest anxiety. Her husband, whom she had rejoined as soon as possible, was no less astonished than she at the recital of her tale, and they both agreed that every care ought to be taken to give the child a proper training. While, therefore, their son was in his infancy they tried to lay by as much money as they could, with which to pay for his education so soon as he was old enough to be taught, and meanwhile they were careful to check any rudiments of evil that they could discern in him. In this way it happened that as he grew up to the age in which most boys prefer play to work, his chief enjoyment lay in committing verses of poetry to memory, and in studying the ancient classics. It is needless, however, to dwell on the method of education pursued in his case. His superiority in intellectual acquirements having been foretold in so unequivocal a fashion, it was certain to be achieved even under the most unfavourable circumstances, and it is therefore only necessary to relate that at the final crisis of the examination the young man came in a triumphant first, and amply exemplified the superior prescience of the heavenly spirits.

It is one thing, however, to pass a good examination in the literature of bygone days, and another to know how to build a bridge over a broad, deep, and rapid river, and yet it was this latter task that the mother of A Choi had undertaken in the name of her son. While her attention had been concentrated on her son's education she had not given more than a passing thought, every now and then, to the duty that lay before her; but now that that was completed, and a thing of the past, the difficulties of this new undertaking began to unmask themselves. In the first place, where were they to get the money from? They were so poor that they had scarcely enough on which to live, and a bridge of the magnitude of that which it was necessary to build over this river would require hundreds of thousands of dollars. In the next place, what Chinaman was there who knew enough about architecture to be able to construct a solid pile of masonry in deep and rapid water? And then again, where were they to get the huge blocks of stone, without which a bridge might as well be

made of sand? These and numerous similar difficulties stared the poor woman in the face the moment that she began to think about the practical part of the work. In the abstract the idea of making a bridge seemed romantic and uncommon, and even fed the vanity of the poor woman to a certain extent; but it was when the undertaking appeared before her in its sober reality, unmasked and denuded of its romantic tints, that she felt almost overwhelmed at its magnitude. Her husband, whose intellect was not sharper than what was necessary to help him through his agricultural pursuits, was unable to give her any assistance in so novel a difficulty. He knew, however, enough of the world to nip in the bud, with proper ridicule, the suggestion which his wife hinted to him of applying to the local authorities for pecuniary assistance. "I might just as well," he said, "go to the sea for fire as go to the authorities for money; they are all for taking, not giving, and you will never get them to part with any money unless it is for their interest to do so. No, no; if you are bent on building the bridge, and haven't got the money to do it with, you must pray to Heaven and take your chance."

"I believe, after all, that is the best plan," replied she, thoughtfully. "I feel, as you say, that it is out of the question to get money from the authorities, and so I will go to the temple of the Goddess of Mercy tomorrow, and ask her to help us."

What a charming creed is that which, in all the difficulties and drawbacks common to a life on earth, can yet reflect with certainty that, over all the vicissitudes and troubles of frail mortals, watches a lovely, pitiful goddess, ever ready to help where help is needed, and to comfort where comfort is looked for. Such a creed as this had the mother of A Choi, and when, the next morning, she wended her way to the temple of the goddess, it was with perfect certainty that, in some way or other, an answer would be given to her prayer. It might not be a satisfactory answer—it might even be a refusal—but, at any rate, she knew her prayer would be listened to, and would not be cast aside with indifference. So, after she had poured out her simple libation of wine, and had burnt a few sticks of incense, and had prayed for assistance in the building of the bridge, she rose from her knees quite content to leave the mode and manner of the response to the goddess.

Her faith was not misplaced. That watchful, lovely goddess to whom her prayer was addressed no sooner heard the prayer of the suppliant than she yearned with pity for the poor woman whose powers were so straitened by her circumstances. She went to the palace of the generous Monarch of Heaven, and requested permission to visit the earth. It was unhesitatingly accorded, and the goddess next proceeded to hold a council with her attendants as to the best course to adopt. These attendants were the once dreadful Eagle which had passed its early days in devouring little children on earth, but which had long since been won over by the pity-loving goddess to be her most faithful disciple; the Spirit of the Flaming Child, who, likewise by her

agency, had been changed from a demon of revolting ferocity into a meek and peaceful-minded spirit; and the daughter of the Dragon Monarch of the Seas, who, charmed by the sweet character of the goddess, had spontaneously enrolled herself amongst her attendants. These she called together, and, after a little consultation, it was agreed that the goddess should descend to the earth in the form of a lovely maiden; the Eagle was to personate a female attendant; the Spirit of the Flaming Child was to become the helmsman to the boat in which they would live while down below; and the daughter of the Dragon Monarch of the Seas was to personate the mother of the goddess. These arrangements having been carried out, the goddess and her suite descended to the earth unseen, and stationed themselves in a boat which they moored a little distance from the shore on which stood the town of Foochow.

The next day it was rumoured that on board this boat was a beautiful girl, who had come to Foochow to seek for a husband, and, sure enough, the passers-by saw at one end of the boat a large board, on which were written the characters "A Husband wanted," while seated in the stern of the vessel was the girl herself. It needed no very good eyes to see that the young lady was extremely beautiful, and in a short time a crowd of admirers had collected on the banks. The mother of the girl then caused it to be known that whoever could hit the tip of the nose of her daughter with a piece of money, whether copper, silver, or gold, should be proclaimed the successful suitor and the happy possessor of the young lady. Her dowry would consist of all the pieces of money that fell into the boat before her nose was hit.

So novel and cosmopolitan a method of obtaining a husband soon attracted numbers of suitors, and before long a continuous flight of money was being projected from the shore into the boat; there was no limit to the number of trials, and the apparent ease of the undertaking, combined with its real difficulty, exactly suited the gambling instincts of the bystanders. Day after day this went on, none of them succeeding in hitting, and yet all going so near as to tempt them to try their luck once more. At length the boat, which was a very large one, was very nearly filled with money, and the goddess (for it was no other than she) thought it was now time to bring the proceedings to a close.

On this day amongst the competitors was the son of the woman who had made the vow to build the bridge. His disposition was bashful and retiring, and it was with the very greatest difficulty that he had been induced to come out and look at the young lady; his sensitive nature revolted from the idea of lowering himself to a level with this herd of suitors, nor was he prepossessed in favour of a girl who could expose herself in this fashion to the insults of the mob. However, he was at length induced to go, and the very first copper that he threw hit her on the tip of her nose. She, though in the garb and person of a maiden, had throughout preserved her divine nature; it was she who had put it into the heart of this young man to do a thing so contrary to his natural bent, and it was for

him and his mother that during all these days she had been collecting money in the boat. The other pieces of money she had warded off from her by means of the sprig of willow which, as a goddess, she always carried in her hand, and which she had kept before her face in an invisible form during this time. The goddess now beckoned to him to come on board, and, amid the cheers of the disappointed suitors, he put off to secure his bride.

No sooner was he on board than the goddess explained to him the true state of the case. "Your mother prayed to me for help in the building of the bridge," said she, "and I, pitying her distress, have come down to help her. All this money that you see in the boat belongs to you. Remove it as soon as you can, and then I must be gone. Help your mother to complete the bridge, and when you want assistance pray to me. Even now you will not find the money of much use without a proper architect. I will provide you with one and will send him to you, and you must do all that he tells you."

The young man expressed as best he could his deep sense of the goddess's condescension, and at once proceeded to remove the money to a safe hiding-place. No sooner was the last cash removed, and he once again on shore, than he saw the group in the boat gradually cast off their material form and dissolve again into their heavenly elements; the boat in which his money had been contained imperceptibly contracted into the shape and appearance of a spotless lily, enthroned on which sat the Goddess of Pity and Love. In her hand she held the sprig of willow that wards off evil influences, and around her, grouped like ministering spirits, were the attendants who had accompanied her. On one side was the faithful Eagle; at her feet was the daughter of the Dragon King, with folded hands, in an attitude of devotion; while on the other side was the Spirit of the Flaming Child. In this manner, seen only by the inspired vision of the young man, the pure and beautiful goddess faded away.

It is hard to turn from dwelling on ethereal scenes to the grosser incidents of our life below; and so A Choi found it. He had never until this moment realised how completely coarse everything earthly was, and he could scarcely listen with patience even to the most musically toned words of his language; much less could he tolerate the harsh, coarse oaths that his neighbours habitually indulged in, though at any other time he would not even have known they were uttered, so accustomed was he to their sound. He was too sensible, however, to be long distracted by these thoughts. He knew that the world was made of sterner stuff than of visions of purity and beauty, and so dismissing these thoughts from his mind, he at once addressed himself to the task his mother had vowed in his name. One memento only of the late scene did he allow himself. At the urgent request of his mother he painted a picture of the goddess as she appeared immediately before she returned to heaven, and fascinated as he had been by the scene, he threw off on canvas the impression left on his fancy while it was yet fresh, and thus

managed to produce a picture which with great felicity and fidelity portrayed the divine nature of the goddess on the point of reasserting itself over the earthly form in which she had clothed it. His mother was enraptured with the painting, hung it up on the wall, showed it to all her friends, and in a short time there was scarcely a house in the neighbourhood that had not made a copy of the picture.

Meanwhile the Goddess of Pity and Love had returned to heaven; she had promised A Choi before leaving to provide him with an efficient architect, and she now set about fulfilling her promise. She sought out the Spirit of the Golden Star, and endeavoured to persuade him to go down to the earth and undertake the duties of architect. The spirit acceded to her request, and immediately prepared to descend. The next day A Choi, who had meanwhile set about advertising for competent men to undertake the work, was surprised by the appearance of a very venerable, aged-looking old man, who explained that he had come to be his architect, if he would have him. Any doubts that A Choi might have had as to the advisability of employing so aged, and therefore so inactive, a man were set at rest by remembering the promise of the goddess to send him an architect, and he accordingly at once came to terms with the old man, and requested his assistance in building the foundations of the bridge.

"The first thing you have to do," said the architect, "is to procure proper materials. The stones that this part of the country produces are far too small, and it is necessary for you to seek elsewhere for them. Somewhere in the province of Canton live three men who are always to be found in each other's company. Two of them are blind, and the other has only one eye; hence they go by the name of the 'One-Eyed Triad.' Find out these men, and they will provide you with what you want."

A Choi thanked the old man for his information, and telling his mother that he was going to Canton to look for stones for the bridge, he took his leave of her and set off. The information that the old man had given was, it is true, somewhat vague, for the province of Canton covers an area of some thousands of square miles, but A Choi felt confident as to the result of his search. He determined to begin with Canton first, and to prosecute his enquiries from that centre. In a few days he arrived at this city, and he now began making diligent enquiries for the One-Eyed Triad. He was considerably disgusted to find that no one knew anything about them, and he began to fear that he had come on a wild goose chase. Day after day he went about making enquiries, but all to no purpose—they were nowhere to be found.

"Vows are dangerous things to make," thought A Choi to himself, as he wandered about disconsolately in the country round Canton, "and I cannot think that Heaven really wishes to be bribed before it will condescend to help us mortals; we are too apt to imagine that what is of supreme interest to us must be the same to the powers above, and I doubt not but that prayers would have saved my mother's life without the

addition of a vow. Virtue is what the gods recognise, and it is vows of repentance and amendment the fulfilment of which is pleasing to them."

While A Choi thus moralised to himself in his lonely walk, in the distance he suddenly saw three men approaching, one in front, the other two behind. All three had sticks with which they were feeling their way, and A Choi at once said to himself, "These must be the men." As they came nearer to his great delight he observed that the one in front had only one eye, while the other two behind were quite blind.

"Do you go by the name of the 'One-Eyed Triad?'" asked A Choi, bowing respectfully as he spoke.

"We do," said the foremost of the three men.

"I have been told," said A Choi, "to apply to you for materials with which to lay the foundations of a bridge at Foochow; can you supply me with a hundred large blocks of stone, and with the means of taking them back to Foochow?"

"All we can do for you we will," replied the first speaker. "Follow us."

The one-eyed man and his two companions then led the way through a variety of meadows and lanes until they reached a small and obscure-looking temple. Into this they went, and no sooner had they got within its precincts than the one-eyed man, going to a little recess in the wall, pulled out from thence a small bronze vase. He opened the lid, and taking out of it a hundred small pills, handed them to A Choi, having first put them into a bottle, which he tightly closed.

"Hasten back to Foochow with them," said he, "and be careful not to open the bottle until you get there; these will form the materials with which to make your foundations."

So saying, he led him to the door and wished him farewell.

A Choi was by his past experience so thoroughly persuaded of the personal intervention of the heavenly powers in his behalf, that whatever incredulity he might otherwise have felt at receiving so contemptible a gift from three beggarly-clad individuals, he was too wise to let any such feelings be stirred in him now. Indeed, his idea was that he was under the special protection of some one deity, who kept appearing to him in different disguises, but who was in reality one and the same throughout. That deity, it need not be said, he imagined to be the Goddess of Pity and Love, that beautiful being the recollection of whom kept alive in him every lofty aspiration and every sanctified thought, and to whom he had made a secret vow that his aim in life should be to deserve her favour.

In the complex character of man, however, there are other elements besides that of faith; A Choi firmly believed in the efficacy of the mud pills that he carried in his bottle, but his curiosity was equally strong to know something more about them. He had been ordered not to open the bottle, but the force of any order is weakened in proportion to the strength of the temptation which is felt to break it; no sooner had he got on board the boat that was to convey him down the Canton river than he pulled the

bottle from his pocket and looked at it. It is not necessary to follow the tortuous channels through which his reason sought to overtake and vanquish the dictates of his conscience ; it is enough to say that he had not been five minutes on board before the cork was taken from the bottle and one of the pills poured into his hand. Scarcely had he recorked the bottle, and was proceeding to examine the pill at leisure, when it commenced to grow visibly in size ; it expanded, and expanded, and expanded until it became too large for him to hold, and he let it drop on to the deck. Still it grew, and with ever increasing velocity, and in a short time it would have sunk the boat, had not A Choi, with the assistance of the crew, by an immense effort succeeded in heaving it overboard. Still it kept on growing, and soon it was appearing above the water, and spreading itself over its surface with alarming rapidity. In the nick of time A Choi bethought him of a charm that he had learnt in his younger days. So, rushing down to his cabin, he got a piece of red paper, wrote on it in the peculiar character which constitutes a charm the word "Stop," ran up again on deck, and threw the paper at the rock. It hit it, and remained on the top of it, and at that instant the rock ceased to grow, and now all people who leave Canton, as they pass by the little island on their left, can reflect on the danger of subordinating duty to any less lofty feeling. Careful not to commit himself in this way again, A Choi returned the bottle to his pocket and sailed without further trouble to Foochow. Here he met with the old man who had volunteered to undertake the duties of architect. He showed him the pills, and explained to him how he had lost one of them. "You were to blame," exclaimed the old man impatiently ; "had you brought back one hundred pills, all difficulty was at an end ; you had simply to throw the stones in and they would have done the work for themselves ; but now that you have only ninety-nine of them, and that there must somehow be a hundred, you will have a good deal of trouble with the remaining foundation. I must inform you," continued the old man, "that I am the Spirit of the Golden Star, sent down to help you by the Goddess of Pity and Love ; those three men that you met were three pigeons also under the same orders, and the hundred pills that they gave you were the remains of an enormous stone once made by a former Empress of China. One of her subjects had attempted to uproot a piece out of heaven, and had succeeded in doing so ; the universe was on the point of collapsing entirely, had not she made this block of stone with which to prop it up. The hundred pills that the One-Eyed Triad gave you were the scattered atoms that had fallen from the block as it was being put into its place. As one of these is lost, and it is impossible to replace it, it will be necessary for the completion of the bridge to have the waters of the river drained almost entirely dry."

Poor A Choi's heart sank within him as he heard these words ; he had hoped that all his difficulties were at an end, and now there remained a task to be done quite as difficult and as apparently impossible as the procuring of the stones for the foundation.

"Forgive me," cried A Choi, "and help me once again, kind Goddess of Pity and Love."

As A Choi involuntarily gave utterance to this prayer, the features of the old man visibly relaxed, and lost that stern expression which A Choi's mistake had caused them to assume.

"There is one way in which it may be done," said the old man; "send a messenger down to the Dragon Monarch of the Seas, and pray him to let there be low water for one day, so soon as we have procured material to supply the missing pill."

Accordingly the old man set to work to get ready a number of large stones, that in the aggregate might supply the deficiency; as soon as a sufficient number of these was got together, and everything was now ready, a despatch was written and officially sealed by the highest officer of the district, and a constable was ordered to take it down to the Dragon Monarch of the Seas.

The constable received the order with great reluctance, for it was impossible to convey this message without taking it down to the bottom of the waters, and to do that it was necessary to sacrifice his life. There was no help for it, however; the matter was pressing. So he went to the edge of the river's bank, with the despatch in his hand. As he sat by the waterside, postponing his plunge as long as possible, a feeling of drowsiness came over him, and he fell asleep. In his sleep he dreamt that he had made the fatal plunge, had been to the Dragon Monarch, and had got his reply. The excitement of the scene awoke him, and as soon as he had recovered himself, he felt for his despatch to see whether it was safe. He found to his astonishment that the envelope had been opened, and upon scanning the contents of the despatch contained in it, to his utter amazement and delight he discovered that what he had imagined to be a dream had actually taken place, and that in his hand he held the favourable response of the Dragon King. He hastened back to A Choi, gave him the answer, and the next day, to their unspeakable delight, the waters of the river became lower and lower until it was possible to touch the bottom without getting wet. Taking advantage of the opportunity, A Choi and his fellow-workmen laboured incessantly until a deep foundation had been dug, and until each stone had been placed in its proper position. As to the pills, they performed their own work for themselves most effectually. Each one, as it was laid in its proper place, expanded to its proper dimensions, and then ceased to grow, so that in a very short time nothing remained to be done but to lay down the horizontal covering which was necessary for the completion of the bridge. At length all was finished, and A Choi and his mother had the inexpressible satisfaction of beholding the completion of their vow. The old man had vanished without being seen and before the last stone was laid, so that A Choi was not able to thank him as he would have wished to do. He felt, however, that without the intervention of the heavenly deities nothing could possibly have been done, and he now proposed to his mother that they should repair to

the temple of the Goddess of Mercy, and there offer up their thanksgivings. A Choi's mother naturally acceded to this proposal, and the two forthwith repaired to the temple. On the last occasion the mother of A Choi had gone thither to pray for assistance, and now amply had her prayer been answered. The mother and son, as they knelt before the image of the goddess, found difficulty in expressing the feelings of their hearts, but their language was after all none the less expressive, and when they rose from their knees it was with the humble assurance that the gracious goddess would accept their thank-offering.

"We must name the bridge," said A Choi to his mother as they slowly paced back to their home.

"Let it be called 'The Bridge of Ten Thousand Ages,'" replied his mother, "for for ages and ages will it seem to remind people how tender, loving, and pitiful is the Goddess of Pity and Love. May all who apply to her for help meet with the same gracious response as we have met with, and may all learn to love and respect her."

“Birds of Passage.”

IN presenting the reader with some specimens of Swedish poetry, and of the works of three great poets of the language, we have selected the subject of *Birds of Passage*; not because the lyrics here given exhibit these poets at their best, but because the idea is a typical one, and has been treated characteristically by each. The advent of the birds of passage is the most anxiously awaited event in the life of the North. Through the summer they bring song and love to whilom dreary silence of the woods; in autumn their flight forbodes the departure of a thousand delights and the speedy approach of a stark and cheerless torpor in nature; their return in spring is the harbinger of the realisation of the hopes and anticipations of the year. Of the poets from whose works our illustrations are taken, the second, Tegnér, is not unknown to English readers. The other two, Stagnelius and Runeberg, though of brilliant fame in Scandinavian lands, are comparative strangers in this country. We must, therefore, say a few words about the life and writings of each.

Johann Eric Stagnelius was born 1793, and died in 1823. His short life of thirty years was one of perpetual martyrdom, owing to malformation of some of his vital organs. It was, therefore, at an early period of life that he, himself of a voluptuous nature, sought to blunt the sting of bodily pain and mental agony by a frequent recourse to the Lethean draughts of the glass. In the company of gay comrades, centred round the glowing bowl, at the sight of which most northern natures will kindle up, Stagnelius was renowned for wit, wanton exuberance of spirits, and unrestrained humour. In the presence of woman his wit would sober down into sarcastic playfulness, not harsh, but pungent, and his humour sotten into genial mirth. But social indulgences belonged to the exceptions of Stagnelius' life. In general he was solitary and contemplative, and this very habit made him throw himself with all the more *abandon* into enjoyment.

With the muse his dealings were of the coyest and most unobtrusive. It is quite uncertain whether anyone, with, perhaps, the exception of a few bosom friends, knew that, during his academical residence at Lund and Upsala, he was a man of poetic gifts at all. But though he cultivated poetry in quiet, he did so none the less earnestly and devotedly. The result was a poetic creation, peculiarly Stagnelius' own, bound up with a well reasoned and deeply thought out system of philosophy. The key-note of this philosophy is *suffering*. Not only man, but all conscious nature is a world moving on an axe of pain, so to say. The sweetest manifestation of this spell-bound existence of suffering is but a sigh, an aspiration of hope for a better, freer, purer, more ideal state. In Stagnelius' philosophy these inspirations forbode the very realisation of their aim. Hence his religion is one of hope, unshaken hope, in an eternal Love, which em-

braces all suffering nature with a father's tenderness and affection, and leads it by long stages towards the blissful ideal for a fast flight, whither the fugitive Psyche is untiringly endeavouring to lift the fluttering dust-laden wing.

The chief peculiarity of Stagnelius' poetry is its unfettered spontaneity. He writes, as it were, despite himself. Not only is this true of his ideas, but the very melody in which they are poured forth itself gushes from an inner spring, flowing on, not through an artificially wrought channel, but in a natural stream. Stagnelius is a poet of nature, yet without the blemishes which result from want of culture. Seldom, if ever, is there found any jarring disparity between form and substance, between words and ideas. His rhymes are as correct as his rhythms are melodious, and in that respect he compares most favourably with other Swedish master-singers; and for melody it would be hard to point out any poetry, north of the Alps, to compare with that of Sweden. Stagnelius wrote utterly regardless of the world's praise or blame. He sang because it was natural necessity with him; he sang to ease his soul and lift his heart in harmonious prayer. And, singular enough, though sighing and yearning, though complaining and wailing, he never became personal, and, therefore, never bitter; his songs contain not one shrill note of despair; his sigh was on behalf of universal fallen nature, his aspiration a universal one on behalf of the fallen spirit of man.

Only six years before he died Stagnelius published his first poem, an epic on Wladimir the Great of Russia, which took the literary world of Sweden by surprise. Shortly afterwards followed a poem on *The Women of the North*, for which he carried off the prize of the Swedish Academy. By the *Lilies of Saron*, which appeared in 1821, his reputation as a poet was considered to be established, though afterwards it was still enhanced by the tragedy *Bacchanterna*, written on an antique model, the last of his greater works which appeared before his death. But his position as a poetic star of the first magnitude was first fully realised when his collected works were published after his death.

The song we give here is a typical illustration of Stagnelius' mode of viewing life and nature:—

See flocks of birds flying
To far foreign land;
They travel on, sighing,
From Ganthiod's strand;
With all weathers mixeth
Their wailing accord:
'Where land we? where fixeth
Our dwelling Thy word?'
So clamours the feather-clad flock to the Lord,

'We leave now so sadly
The Scandian fell;
There thrive we; so gladly
Therein did we dwell;

In bloom-covered trees there
 We builded our nest,
 The balm-laden breeze there
 Safe rocked us to rest.
 Now stretches our flight unto regions unguessed.

'With rosy wreath in
 Her ringlets of gold,
 Sat Midsummer Night in
 The forest, sweet-souled.
 In sleep ne'er reposed we—
 So lovely she seemed—
 With rapture just dozed we
 Till clear Morning beamed
 And waked us again from the car where he gleamed.

'Then vaulted groves swinging
 O'er hillocks arose,
 With pearls to them clinging,
 And quivered the rose.
 The oak is now shattered,
 The roses have fled,
 The winds' play is scattered
 In storms overhead,
 With frost-blossoms white is the May-meadow spread.

'What do we to stay now
 In Northland? Its run
 Grows straighter each day now,
 And dimmer its sun.
 What boots us our crying?
 We leave but a grave.
 In space to be flying
 God wings to us gave.
 Thus, then, we salute thee, thou deep-roaring wave!'

The birds with this song on
 Their journey are whirled,
 Till welcomed, ere long, on
 A lovelier world;
 Where vine-tendrils swaying
 To elm-branches cling,
 And rivulets playing
 Mid myrtle groves spring,
 And woodlands with hope and with happiness ring.

When dire haps arriving
 Thy fortunes control,
 When storm-winds are driving,
 Then weep not, oh soul!
 There smiles o'er the wave there
 At each bird a strand;
 On yon side the grave there
 Is also a land
 All gilt with eternity's bright morning's brand,

Esaias Tegnér was born in 1782. Of his father little is known beyond the fact that he was an honest good soul in ecclesiastical orders. But his mother, Sara Maria Seidelia, was a singularly gifted woman, fiery, witty, a successful dabbler in verse, yet a diligent and careful housekeeper withal. In his tenth year Esaias lost his father, and being one of a family of six children left to the care of a mother without means, his prospects were anything but brilliant. Soon after this he accepted the post of secretary to a rural official, where he gave evidence of great mental endowments coupled with an amiable absence of mind. If he found a book to read at a leisure hour he would go up a ladder, or climb to the top of a thatched roof, and there read on, chained to his volume, until some call or disturbing accident roused him up from his occupation. He would, instead of pounce, dash the contents of the ink bottle on his writing; being ordered to keep watch over an open gate, to prevent cattle going in, he would take up his position on a hillock commanding a good view of the cattle, settle down to his book, and read on with heedless eagerness, while the whole herd of cattle browsed on the forbidden field inside. Tegnér's patron had frequently observed extraordinary flashes of originality escaping his ward, and conceived at length the idea of giving him the advantages of an academical education. In 1796, therefore, young Esaias was sent to Malmö, to a certain Captain Lövnhjihn, that he might, in company with the Captain's sons, be prepared for the university under the tuition of his own elder brother, Gustav, who had already taken a situation as private tutor in the family. Both brothers subsequently resided with a certain iron-master, Myhrman by name, a gentleman of high culture and great learning, and firm and noble character. During a sojourn of seven months at this house Esaias, who had a slight smattering of Greek before, read the Iliad through three times, the Odyssey twice, and waded through the greater part of Virgil, Horace, and Ovid beside. In 1799 he went to the University of Lund, and in three years finished his academical career with first-class honours. It is a proof of Tegnér's varied endowments and breadth of sympathy that, being especially devoted to the study of Greek, he had, during his academical sojourn, applied himself with ardour to physics, mathematics (especially the differential calculus), and to philosophy. The last-named science, however, was not congenial to his mind, for, as he himself writes, "With my concrete mind I have but little taste, or even aptitude, for abstract speculations, and although I may have some keenness of perception, yet I lack depth and penetration, and easily lose my way in a long systematic deduction which gives no *points d'appui* to my fancy." In 1805 he was appointed professor of æsthetics and sub-librarian to the university. Although these preferments procured him but a scanty means of subsistence, yet he married a daughter of his benefactor Myhrman, to whom he had, as a youth, formed a pure and lasting attachment. Strange to say, marriage changed him from a coy, retiring youth into a wanton lion of society, with a ready tongue, particularly revelling in equivocal wit, the sting

of which was too habitually aimed at woman's foibles. This was no mere Tegnér's idiosyncrasy, it was the idiosyncrasy of the age; it was the fashion of the witty world of Sweden, which had spread from the Court of Gustav Adolf III. into the outlying recesses of society in the provinces. He became now an equally jovial host at home and an amusing guest abroad; his spontaneous wit sparkled in every direction, and was soon the common traditional property of the people. Tegnér's wit was naturally harmless, but when society had put him in the vein, he might be heard sometimes to utter things which, to earnest-minded people, savoured far too much of irreverence and irreligion. This change in his life had a corresponding influence on his poetry. It left the cool, still, sombre deep of his soul, and rose to the surface, where the sunbeams of pleasure reflected upon it a greater variety of hues and tints. Its scope was extended, but what it gained in breadth and brilliancy it lost in depth and intensity, if we except those singular and unexpected flashes which suddenly disclose an intense sympathy with human nature, but which are flashes and nothing more.

The poem which first made Tegnér famous throughout Sweden was *Svea*, a song to his native land, which gained the prize of the Swedish Academy in 1811. It was received with a thrill of enthusiasm throughout the country, although it contained the heaviest invectives against the morals and manners of the time, and despite the singularly senatorial *laudatio temporis acti* with which the song teems. Now followed poetical works, one after the other, in rapid succession, the most remarkable among which are the *Candidates for Confirmation*, *Afel*, and *Frithjofs Saga*, the one of Tegnér's works which has made his fame world-wide. With *Frithjofs Saga*, in 1825, his poetic power may be said to have been exhausted, and, eight years after the publication of that poem, the fatal disease transmitted by birth to him in the shape of hereditary insanity made its first earnest appearance, and overcast the serene soul of the poet with clouds of melancholy and sad distraction, and terminated fatally on a brilliantly northlit night, November 2, 1846.

As a poet Tegnér has been a bone of contention amongst the critics almost up to the present time. In Sweden no poet before nor after, except Runeberg, who is not a Swede, has enjoyed anything like Tegnér's popularity. No Swedish poet has become so famous out of Sweden, and no Swedish poet has been so persistently translated into foreign languages as Tegnér, the translations, however, being chiefly confined to *Frithjofs Saga*. On the other hand he has been sharply criticised, and his poetry has been found fault with, almost on every score, by some critics, while others have advocated even his faults as perfections. We shall not endeavour to decide between the two conflicting parties. But this we say, that Tegnér was gifted with great poetical talent; he exhibited it in perhaps unexampled clearness of language and aptness of illustration, qualities which in themselves constitute the popular favourite. But his vivid imagination sometimes carried him into illustrative researches which

led him into such homely quaintnesses as to jar upon the tender nerves of the art critic with too shrill a note in the midst of a wealth of harmonious sweetness; and this is his chief sin in the critic's eyes. Unlike Stagnelius, Tegnér's poetry centres round no single philosophical ideal, but is sporadic and the unsystematic result of impulse; the one prevailing thought in his writings is intense love of fatherland, and of all that is noble and good in the national character.

In Tegnér's lyric of the *Passage Birds* we see no embodiment of a philosophic idea, no illustration of transcendental laws, but simply a beautiful example of that love of home and fatherland towards which his ideas for the most part gravitated.

So hot shine the sunbeams the Nile waters o'er,
And palm trees there give not a shadow more;
Then longing for fatherland urges us forward,
Our troops then forgather: To nor'ward, to nor'ward.

And deep underfoot then we see like a grave
The green-growing earth and the blue-coloured wave,
Where fresh stir and tempest to each day is given,
While we fare so free 'mid the cloudlets of heaven.

Far off amid mountains, a meadow is there,
Where lighteth our flock, where our bed we prepare.
Our eggs in the chilly pole's regions we lay there,
And hatch out our brood in the midnight sun's ray there.

On our peaceful valley no fowler can chance,
The gold-winged elf-people hold there their dance;
The green-mantled wood-nymphs at even are lurking,
And dwarfs in the mountains the red gold are working.

His stand on the mountains Vindevale's son takes;
His snow-covered wings with an uproar he shakes.
Hares whiten; the quicken with berries is smothered;
Our troops then forgather: To southward, to southward.

To green-growing fields, to a temperate main,
To shade-giving palm trees our mind turns again.
There rest we ourselves from our airy flight forward;
There long we again for our world to the nor'ward.

Johann Ludvig Runeberg was born at Jacobsstad in Finland, in February 1804; and at the age of eighteen commenced his studies at the University of Åbo. In spite of his straitened circumstances, which compelled him to sacrifice a considerable portion of his time to the instruction of junior students, he succeeded in passing through his academical career with high honours, and in 1827 proceeded to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. During his sojourn at Åbo, the principal university town of Finland, he took a close and warm interest in all that related to the inner life of his compatriots, and particularly delighted in studying the manners and character of the Finnish peasantry. It is to the insight which he

thus obtained into the springs of action at work in the heart of the people, his earnest study of their past history, and his unfeigned sympathy with their patriotic aspirations, that his poetry owes its intensely national hue, and which has made his name loved and cherished alike by high and low throughout the Swedish-speaking North. No poet has ever so thoroughly touched the Northern heart, and yet, perhaps, the most distinctive feature of his verse, its extreme delicacy and feeling and expression, is not exactly Scandinavian. There is throughout the whole of his poetry a certain simplicity, and even coyness, which at first might be regarded as a knack or mannerism, but which, as we study it more deeply, we find to be the natural outcome of the long-suffering tenderness of the Finnish national character, toned down and refined by consummate classical culture. In his epic poems he entirely ignores the ordinary artifices for developing a surprising climax, contenting himself with allowing the relation of his facts to lead of themselves to a natural and unaffected conclusion.

In his descriptions of scenery, persons, character, and incidents, however, this simplicity of action is balanced by a Homeric attention to detail. All the wealth of ornamental and descriptive epithets which this treatment involves, which would in the hands of most writers become ponderous and irksome, is employed by Runeberg with so airy and masterly a touch that it becomes always naïve and charming.

Runeberg's lyrics are remarkable for spontaneity, picturesqueness, innocent playfulness, and, above all, they give evidence of the author's close study of, and deep communion with, nature. Every subject that he touches he makes peculiarly his own by his ideal treatment of it. But his favourite themes are Finnish love and "barndoms minnem"—a tenderly regretful yearning after the memories of childhood. All or any of these characteristics might, it is true, be found in the rudest of folk songs or the blankest of metaphysical blank verse, but in Runeberg they are conjoined with the most perfect command of language, appropriateness of rhythm, and appreciation of melody. As far as we can see, Runeberg never writes until the poetic idea has presented itself to him clothed in melody.

Runeberg's treatment of his subject in the following song differs materially from that of the other two poets whose versions we have rendered. In Stagnelius' eyes the migrations of the passage birds served a cosmical purpose, while to Runeberg they appear as the manifestation of the many unexplainable mysteries of nature, and to Tegnér merely as the result of an inborn instinct.

Ye fugitive guests on the far foreign strand,
When seek ye again your own dear native land ?
When flowers coyly peep out,
In native dales growing,
And rivulets leap out
Past alders a-blowing.

On lifted wings hither
The tiny ones hie;
None tells the way whither
Through wildering sky,
Yet surely they fly.

They find it so safely, the long sighed for north,
Where spring both their food and their shelter holds forth,
The fountain's breast swelleth,
Refreshing the weary;
The waving branch telleth
Of pleasures so cheery;
And where the heart dreameth
'Neath midnight sun's ray,
And love scarcely deemeth,
'Mid song and 'mid play,
How long was the way.

The fortunate blithe ones, they build amid rest,
'Mong moss-covered pine trees, their peaceable nest.
And tempest and fray, too,
And care and its powers,
They find not the way to
The warderless towers.
There joy needs no charming,
But May-day's bright brand,
And night to sleep calming
With rose-tinted hand
The tiny wee band.

Thou fugitive soul on a far foreign strand,
When seek'st thou again thine own dear fatherland?
When each palm tree beareth,
In fatherworld growing,
Thy calm faith prepareth
In joy to be giving,
On lifted wings thither,
As little birds hie.
None shows the way whither
Through wildering sky,
Yet sure dost thou fly.

Not to be.

The rose said, "Let but this long rain be past,
And I shall feel my sweetness in the sun,
And pour its fulness into life at last;"

But when the rain was done,
But when dawn sparkled through unclouded air,
She was not there.

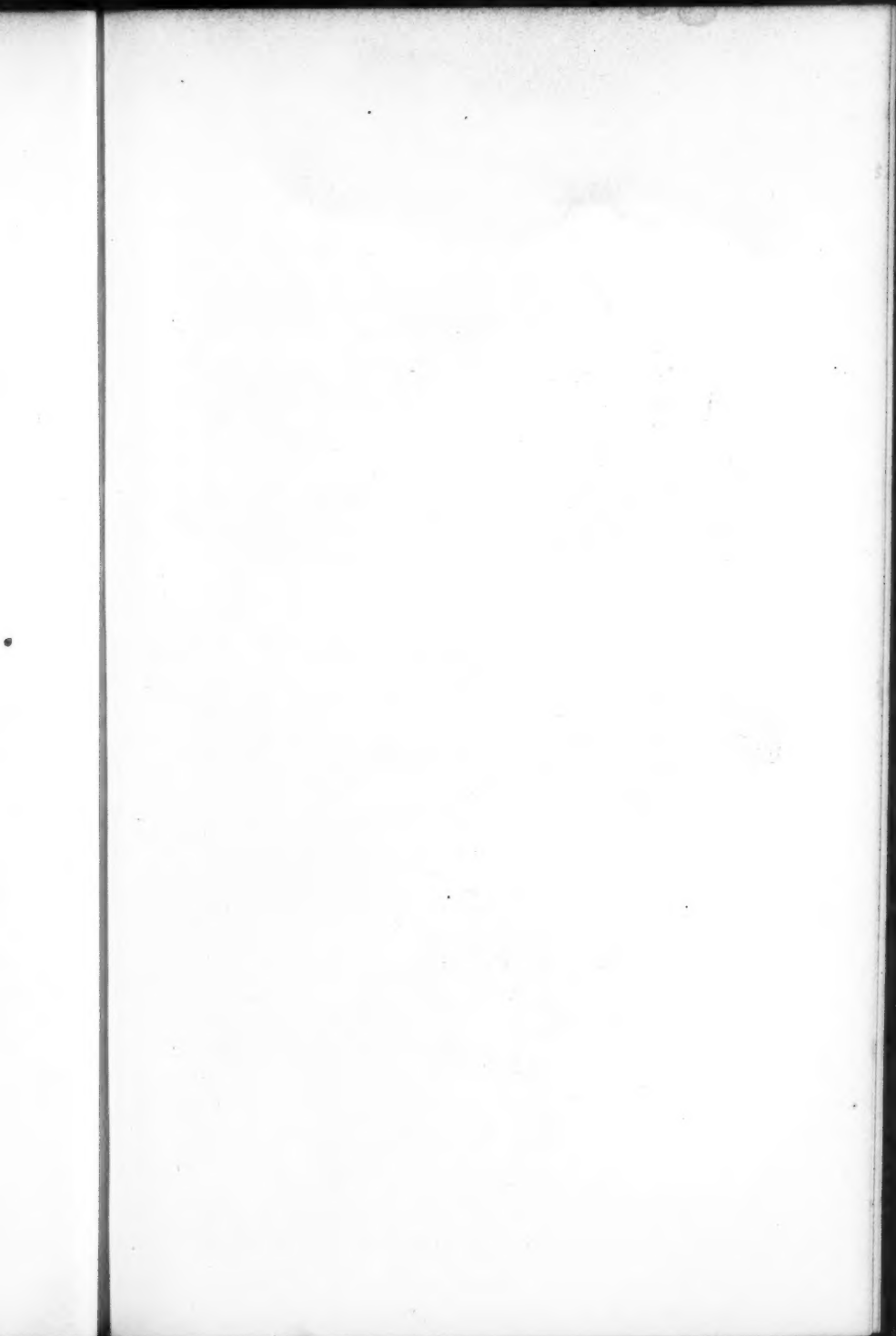
The lark said, "Let but winter be away,
And blossoms come, and light, and I will soar,
And lose the earth, and be the voice of day;"

But when the snows were o'er,
But when spring broke in blueness overhead,
The lark was dead.

And myriad roses made the garden glow,
And skylarks carolled all the summer long—
What lack of birds to sing and flowers to b'low?

Yet, ah, lost scent, lost song!
Poor empty rose, poor lark that never trilled!
Dead unfulfilled!

AUGUSTA WEBSTER.





THE LABOURERS IN THE FIELD LOOKED UPON THEM CURIOUSLY.

The Atonement of Team Dundas.

CHAPTER V. AT THE HILL.



SMALL country society like that of North Aston receives with unbounded hospitality or rejects with unconquerable suspicion a new comer of proper appearance, not fully accredited. Either the tedium of life carries it over ordinary caution, and people are glad to welcome any break in the monotony under which minds are rusting and hearts are withering, or the desire to remain safe in the narrow fastnesses of the known is stronger than the yearning for enlarged experience, which may have its dangers. Hence strangers

without vouchers are assimilated greedily or repudiated crudely ; and the one process is oftentimes as disastrous in the end as the other.

Fortunately for the present success of Madame de Montfort's plans, whatever they might be, North Aston, led by the rector, made up its mind as a community to receive her on her own credentials and his sponsorship ; to suspect nothing of what might lie concealed, and to give full value to all the charms and graces that were evident.

Mrs. Harrowby, on hearing the report of the day's "find" from her daughters, did certainly look doubtful, saying with emphasis ; "I am sorry for it ; we have had enough of foreigners here !" meaning Mrs. Dundas and her heathenisms, which time neither softened nor destroyed.

Still, taken by the hand as Madame was by both Mr. and Mrs. Birkett, Mrs. Harrowby's vague dissatisfaction went for nothing, even though she was Mrs. Harrowby of the Hill ; and Madame found her order of admittance easy to obtain, and her path to the small North Astonian penetralia made marvellously smooth.

Then she gained no small amount of social glory, if also some amount

of blame, by the mode in which she trimmed and arranged her little place. She made it the prettiest, daintiest doll's house to be found in the whole country; and fulfilled the rector's generalised suggestion of availability with a perfectness which he himself never expected. And he was of those who hoped all things from Madame, and believed no less than he hoped.

Here she built up a rustic verandah, there threw out a picturesque conservatory; flowers and flowering bushes were planted by the cartload, till the whole place was like a picture for colour and a flower-farm for perfume. The rooms were decorated in patterns, tints, and methods, quite out of the ordinary North Astonian beat; and therefore much canvassed. These decorations indeed, made almost a schism in the place; one side liking the drawing-room paper of flat blue-green, with the high dado of that indeterminate hue which goes by the name of peacock-blue, and the other side calling it ugly and eccentric. But Madame got the greater number of votes in her favour on the whole; for the gentlemen were with her to a man, and made the ladies understand that their want of admiration was the result of prejudice and narrow brains, and a sign of their mental inferiority generally. The ladies, on their side, admitted the good taste of the muslin curtains, lined with delicately-tinted tarlatane and looped up with broad bows of ribbons to match, which she had hung wherever they could be hung; and the worked muslin squares for antimacassars, pinned on to the chairs with sash ribbons, were also generally approved of as improvements. These were matters more within their natural range, and whereon the gentlemen allowed them to have their own opinions undisturbed; though here again Mrs. Harrowby shot her little shafts of dissent, for the home target only, and said disdainfully after their first state visit, when Josephine was enthusiastic and she wished to restrain her excessive eulogy; "Yes, pretty enough in a way; but too much like a milliner's shop to please me. Indeed, Madame de Montfort is too much like a milliner all through for my taste."

And Mrs. Corfield, looking round on this billowy expanse of muslin, put in briskly, as her demurrer of good counsel; "I should take these curtains and things down for every day if I were you, Madame, and put them up, if you must at all, only for grand occasions. They will cost you a fortune in washing else, and that stupid Mary Warren will tear them to rags before you know where you are!"

Letting these little notes of dissidence pass, when the whole thing was complete no one could deny that it was a success, or say that Lionnet was other than "the most perfect little gem of its kind;" as the rector used to declare a dozen times a day, with the air of a man who has created something for which the world owes him gratitude, and who has the right therefore to be always holding out his hand for payment. And as it was a success, even with the blue-green walls and the green-blue dado, its clever mistress gained a certain flavour of renown, amounting almost to a moral virtue, from the fact that her house was picturesquely arranged and her rooms quaintly furnished, and that she had given the other house-

keepers of North Aston a few new ideas in the way of assorting colours and hanging breadths of muslin.

Madame la Marquise had been at North Aston about six weeks now, of which the last two had been passed in her own house. All the ladies, save Mrs. Dundas, had called on her. They had waited until Lionnet was reported to be finished and she ready to receive, and had then left their cards as the official act of registration demanded by the proprieties. She had seen and been introduced to each in turn at the rectory; but there she had been only a guest, holding a reflected, not individual, position, the rector bearing the sole burden of responsibility. Now each family took its share in the plunge, and for good or ill she was accepted as one of themselves.

The second stage in the little conventional Order of Initiation to be gone through would be her own return visits; the third, the set dinners that would be given in her honour, when her mourning should be sufficiently mitigated to allow her to enter into state amusements; the fourth, her own acknowledgment in kind. Afterwards, she would be exactly niched and tabulated according to her deserving, and drop from a phenomenon into a circumstance. Some of the ladies thought it was time she should so drop. They were tired of hearing Madame la Marquise de Montfort so continually discussed—and praised.

The first place to which Madame went on her round, in her "landlord's" carriage, was the Hill. Oddly enough she was nervous about this visit. She always had been nervous with the Harrowbys, and especially with Mrs. Harrowby. When that lady had called at the rectory while she was there, she had turned even paler than when the young ladies were announced; and when she praised the baby, which Mrs. Birkett was nursing as a matter of course, the usually placid Marquise had trembled like a school-girl on her examination-day as, gracefully taking the child, she laid it in Mrs. Harrowby's arms, and heard her say as if to herself musingly; "What a pretty little thing!—of whom does it remind me, I wonder! I cannot think!"

On which, recovering herself—for trembling was not much in Madame's way—she had said with her pleasant smile; "She ought to remind you of one of your own children, for she has the same name, Josephine."

Nothing since then had occurred to destroy the odd embarrassment always felt by Madame in the presence of Mrs. Harrowby, as nothing had occurred to soften the vague distrust which Mrs. Harrowby felt for Madame; and the visit of registration had been paid, and was now to be returned, things remaining in the same condition of armed neutrality as before; Mrs. Harrowby knowing that Madame wanted to conciliate her, and Madame knowing in her turn that Mrs. Harrowby distrusted her and would not be conciliated.

The Hill was a large old-fashioned country house approached by a magnificent double avenue of horse-chestnuts, and surrounded by a stately garden laid out in the formal terraces and parterres of Queen Anne's

time. Within, it had a great deal of heavy furniture, mostly ugly, set in inconvenient places, and a general expression of dinginess and wealth consequent on generations of possession and an inherited quality of family conservatism. It would have been against the Harrowby traditions to have remodelled or modernised anything belonging to them; and the result was by no means lively.

At the present moment there was an unmistakable look of dullness about the place the inevitable result of the death of the Head. The old chief had gone and the young one was absent, and the sole representatives of power were the widowed mother and maiden sisters—who had none. Things went on as they had always gone on, from the motive force belonging to the accumulated habits of years; but there was no spring, no life, no growth in the place, and everything was at a kind of rusty standstill, wherein nothing moved but the rust, and that increased.

So it would be till Edgar should return and put himself at the head of affairs. Why he had joined his regiment instead of selling out and coming home, as the only proper place for him on his father's death, no one ever knew. It had offended his mother gravely at the time, and she had told him her mind, as was her wont. But though her son had been respectful enough in his reply, he had kept to his plans, and offered no reason that carried conviction with it. There was evidently some mystery connected with this sudden and inconvenient resolve of his; and even if Mrs. Harrowby had wished to penetrate it, she would not have been able—it was like hewing at a stone wall with a straw to try conclusions with Edgar when his mind was made up, and those only who could read small print through the traditional milestone could see into his motives or his actions if he wished them hidden.

The consequences of his absence however, were the beginning of all sorts of small frays and fractures in the well-ordered fabric of the Hill property, and a general look of moribund grandeur about the old place, dingy, dignified, substantial, but evidently needing manipulation with new brooms.

It was the greatest possible contrast to Madame's airy fairy little palace of light and colour, her doll's house of picturesque arrangements and clever makeshifts. Size apart, her miniature Lionnet was far more charming to her than this dingy old Hill, and more in consonance with her tastes and habits. Nevertheless, her heart leapt within her, her cheeks flamed suddenly and as suddenly the colour faded, her eyes sparkled with a bright metallic lustre that made them harder and more inscrutable than ever, as, looking up to the grey old mansion standing in the sunlight at the end of the blossoming avenue—that avenue which was the pride of the country and the show-place for miles round—she said something to herself in a low voice, whereof the nurse sitting opposite with the child heard only one word above the crunching gravel: "Mine!"

Mrs. Harrowby was at home, and Madame la Marquise de Montfort was ushered through the lofty hall, the walls of which were decorated

with buffaloes' heads and royal antlers, brushes, New Zealand and North American Indian weapons, rare birds that had fallen to the master's gun in foreign parts, and models of monstrous fish that had come upon his hook—in short, the usual trophies and ornaments of a country gentleman's hall—through the long closely-carpeted passage set thick with quaint curiosities, through the ante-room made dangerous by obtrusive piles of fine old china, and into the inner drawing-room where the ladies sat.

She was by no means flushed or sparkling now. Indeed, she was so deadly white that Mrs. Harrowby's first movement was one of compassion, fearing she was about to faint; but her smooth voice and perfect self-possession of bearing reassured the lady, so that she greeted her as she would have greeted any other stranger, with good breeding but coldly. Josephine was the only one who gave her hand a frank press or looked into her face with anything like friendly interest in her own.

Josephine had "taken to" her; and what can you do against a girl's fascination with only such a broken weapon as a vague surmise of evil, and a baseless dislike, you cannot tell why? Mrs. Harrowby was annoyed that her youngest daughter had found Madame so fascinating; but she was powerless to change her for the present; and she only hoped no ill would come of it.

After the welcoming greetings were over, they all sat down and began to discuss that aspect of Shakespeare and the musical glasses which was proper to the occasion. And the first thing which Madame did was to praise the avenue. She thought that if there was safe ground anywhere, here at least she should be free of pitfalls.

Mrs. Harrowby, though immensely proud of this avenue, did not somehow care for Madame de Montfort's praises.

"It is nothing so very wonderful," she said coldly. "It is not better than Bushey Park."

"It seems odd to me that a private house can bear such a comparison—can be ranked indeed anywhere near a royal palace!" said Madame sweetly.

"Evidently you have not seen many of our great houses," returned Mrs. Harrowby, disagreeably.

"Are there many with double avenues of horse-chestnut?" asked Madame, with graceful simplicity.

Mrs. Harrowby looked annoyed.

"Have you seen Chatsworth?" she asked, retreating in good order.

"Yes," answered Madame. "It is very fine; the park and gardens—everything on a magnificent scale; still," reflectively, "I don't remember any double avenue of horse-chestnuts."

"I should have scarcely thought you so literal, Madame," said Mrs. Harrowby, with a dry cough.

"No? Nor am I to everyone; but there are certain people who one takes literally; people who speak fast and heedlessly one passes by, but the literal talkers seem to require the same kind of hearers."

Madame said this very nicely, making it a compliment by implication

so far as manner went ; but Mrs. Harrowby moved uneasily on her seat. She felt the sarcasm through the flattering manner, and all the more as it was delivered in a form she could not resent.

Some family portraits were hanging round the room. Madame's quick eyes had noted the fact as she came in, but she had not looked at them more attentively after that one hurried glance of entrance. They were of all kinds. Here was an ancestor in a cannon-curved wig and long, flowered waistcoat ; here the ancestress corresponding, in high-rolled powdered hair, peaked stomacher, and hoops ; there was the late Mr. Harrowby when a young man, with a curl on his forehead and in the high-collared blue coat and tight nankeens of the period ; and in the companion panel hung Mrs. Harrowby when a young woman, her head turned over her bare shoulder to the left, with ringlets parted on one side, gigot sleeves, and shoes with sandals plainly shown beneath her short and narrow gown. Over the piano were to be seen the three Misses Harrowby, done in chalks, when little girls ; over the door was the picture of two boys in Highland costume, Edgar and Frank. There they were again—Edgar in his cadet's uniform, Frank in his college cap and gown ; and here again—Edgar in his full captain's regimentals, as he looked just before he sailed for India and Frank as a young gentleman of fashion, for the rising generation to laugh at in their turn, as Frank himself had often laughed at his father's high collar and nankeen tights. Both were considered good likenesses.

So said Mrs. Harrowby when, seeing Madame looking at the portraits of herself and husband, she profited by the occasion to withdraw altogether from that unlucky discussion on chestnut avenues, and threw the conversational ball to another quarter.

"Have you seen those, Madame, my sons Edgar and Francis ?" she asked. "They are admirably done, and admirable likenesses."

Madame gave a perceptible movement—it was not a start nor a shiver, it looked like that thing people call a thrill. For a second she looked down, and her breath seemed to come by an effort. Then raising her eyes with a certain fixedness that did not seem quite natural, she turned them full on the pictures indicated, and said quietly ; "They look good portraits ;" adding with her smooth flattering air, "and sons to be proud of, I should think."

"Oh !" cried Josephine impulsively, "you would say that if you knew Edgar !"

"They both seem nice," said Madame with a sudden flush and an inexplicable confusion of face ; so visibly and so much confused that Mrs. Harrowby looked at her keenly, a flush of terror in her own.

Then said Madame la Marquise de Montfort, her lips quivering and genuine tears in her eyes ; "You must think me very foolish, dear Mrs. Harrowby"—Mrs. Harrowby winced at the familiar endearment of the epithet—"but the portrait of your eldest son has reminded me so powerfully of my poor husband, I cannot pretend not to feel it, and I cannot conceal my emotion. It was just his air—just his look !"

The dainty handkerchief went up to her eyes, and she suppressed a little sob that was not affected.

"Which do you think my eldest?" asked Mrs. Harrowby, still with that look of vague terror in her face, but now with a certain stern watchfulness superadded.

"You have told me yourself," answered Madame tremulously; "your son Edgar."

"Yet it is not a French face at all," said the mother. "It is a purely English face and a purely English character."

"My dear husband had English blood in him," said Madame more composedly. "He was indeed more like an Englishman than a Frenchman, and I often used to tell him so. You see no trace of what we mean by the French physiognomy in my little Fina?"

"No, none; certainly not; most strangely not!" said Mrs. Harrowby with almost cruel emphasis.

"No," replied Madame; "there is none to see."

After this the conversation drifted on to other topics; and in due time Madame took her graceful leave, and went further on her round.

"How could I be such an idiot!" was her voiceless self-reproach as she drove down the avenue. "I thought I had nerved myself too well for this! But I got out of it cleverly, and I do not think she suspected me. Perhaps indeed, I made a good stroke; a fluke if I did! I must be more cautious for the future however, and not let myself be caught so foolishly again. Thank heaven, the worst is over now till he comes back!"

On her side, Mrs. Harrowby, in reply to Josephine's enthusiastic "Now mamma, is she not charming?" gave, as her deliberate conviction, this dictum: "My dear girl, what Madame de Montfort really is I do not know, nor who M. de Montfort was; but of this I feel sure, there is something very odd about her, and something that I do not like at all. I say nothing against her character, because I know nothing; but if I had had my way, we should have had a detective down from London and have learnt all about her before we accepted her. I hinted as much to Mr. Birkett, but I think she has bewitched him like some others," with a displeased look at Josephine. "At all events, I don't like her; and though I am obliged to visit her, as every one else does, I do not trust her, and I wish she had never come into the place. That is all I have to say."

"Mamma, you are not just!" remonstrated Josephine with a burning face. "I have never known you so uncharitable before."

"Hush, Josephine," said Fanny in a reproving voice; "you should not speak so!"

"Josephine! how can you be so impertinent to mamma?" echoed Maria; while Mrs. Harrowby said, illogically but angrily; "If this is the consequence of your sudden friendship for Madame de Montfort, how can you expect that I should like her, Josephine? I am ashamed of you!—taking part in this manner with a stranger against your own mother!"

CHAPTER VI.

FOR AND AGAINST.

It was the fashion in North Aston to praise Madame de Montfort in public, though in private there were more dissentients than confessed themselves openly. Mr. and Mrs. Birkett, however were genuine in their admiration, and the warmest of her friends. She had fascinated the rector; all in honour and sobriety of feeling be it understood, in nowise trenching on his loyalty to his wife or giving her cause for uneasiness. Still it was fascination; and he did not deny it. But Adelaide held aloof, and "declined to discuss Madame" when the past and real personality of that enigmatic lady came on the carpet, as it always did whenever two or three were in conclave together. And her reticence had an ugly look and caused remarks. But her parents had censured her so severely in the beginning when she had questioned the entire satisfactoriness of their new favourite, that she had taken the lesson to heart, and now sat silent and disdainful when Madame was made the central point of social interest. She was disdainful indeed about the whole affair, and wondered where her father's perspicacity and her mother's instincts had gone. She never for a moment faltered in her own belief that Madame was an adventuress, and she accepted her title as she would have accepted the account of a materialized spirit. But as all this was less from true perception than from the jealousy of sex and exclusiveness of condition characteristic of her, her manifest dislike had not much influence in the place, and people only said among themselves; "How wretchedly Miss Birkett gets on at home!" and; "what bad taste it is in Adelaide to show the world how much she dislikes Madame de Montfort when her father and mother have taken her up so warmly!"

For the rest, the Fairbairns had received the new comer with the facile acceptance of good-natured indifference. They did not become intimate with her, because they were not intimate with anyone. So large a family as theirs was independent of outsiders; but they were always smiling and friendly to Madame when they met, and suspected nothing because they did not give themselves the trouble to think or compare.

Of the Harrowbys, as we know, Mrs. Harrowby distrusted her, but was too cautious to say so in public. She contented herself with home objurgations, which relieved her mind and did not commit her to an embarrassing course. The elder two daughters were half charmed and half repelled—the former in Madame's society, the latter in her absence when they dissected and considered her; but Josephine was honestly in love with her, and cared for nothing so much as to be with her, worshipping her as simple-minded, loving-hearted girls do worship older women better versed than themselves in the grammar of fascination.

The Corfields were tepid. The doctor laughed in his sleeve at her dyed hair and well-arranged face—marvellously well done; but he did not

betray her even to his wife. It was no business of his, he thought; why should he be the one to make her eat dirt? And as she was an amenable kind of person in speech, and took all Mrs. Corfield's recommendations amicably, with promises of obedience, that good fussy soul for her own part was naturally more prepossessed in her favour than not; and Alick thought her more like a Zenobia than she was.

But no one had gone down before her in such unquestioning worship as Mr. Dundas—her landlord; though no one hated her so much or said it so openly as Pepita; whose ill word counted for the enemy. Hitherto the standing feud of the place had been between Pepita and Adelaide; as indeed how should it not, between such discordant elements? A violent and undisciplined savage without principles, reticence, or the sense of social decorum—there must needs be enmity between her and a conventional English lady whose pulses never quickened with emotion; whose thoughts and affections—passions she had none—were under the strictest discipline of the coldest reason; to whom the alpha and omega of morality were the conventional proprieties of English middle-class life; and who despised all that was not English save Parisian millinery and Italian art. Pepita had hated Adelaide because of her coldness, her English ladyhood and her English prejudices; and Adelaide had hated Pepita because of her fury, her Spanish habits and her Spanish prejudices. Now they buried their own long-used hatchet in the grave of a joint animosity to Madame, and even drew together in some show of alliance that they might the better smite her.

They met with their match in Madame de Montfort, who knew the art of saying disagreeable things in a pleasant manner and the value of showing the power of fight when needed, though her governing policy was one of conciliation. With all Adelaide Birkett's self-control, she had more intelligence and more experience; and with less raw material of beauty than Mrs. Dundas, she had a better style and greater charm. Hence she carried society with her when she came to close quarters with her enemies, and always contrived to turn their guns against themselves.

And then she was fresh, and the North Astonians had got accustomed to each other and palled with Pepita. The Spaniard was gorgeous and magnificent truly; but she was always the same; and when you had once seen her dressed for the evening, with her high comb, her falling lace mantilla half concealing the knot of crimson ribbon in her gummed hair that became her so well, her handsome face, handsome still if disfigured by its coarse paint, looking out from the softening folds like the face of a many-fleshed and much-bedaubed Melpomene, you had seen her always. She never varied; was never more than a grand bit of waxwork for her quieter days, or a very vulgar Mænad for the more disturbed, when the blood was in her brain to excess; and her temper suffered in consequence. But Madame de Montfort, if also in a certain sense always the same for sweetness and placidity, was in another always new. If her tact and gentleness never varied, her conversation did; having ever some fresh sparkle

of anecdote or description, some enlivening talk that made her the most delightful companion possible. She knew so many famous people, and so much about them, that she was real food to the hungry minds of North Aston, bound by circumstance to social famine. And she did not rush out all her knowledge at a breath, but kept it in reserve judiciously; detailing, only in detached bits, those circumstances of varied travel or celebrated companionship which she thought would interest and amuse. It was really quite an education to talk to Madame; and if sometimes she made slips and confounded her friend Stonewall Jackson with her next-to-father Abraham Lincoln, or gave Bismarck's policy—told her in confidence—to Bunsen's private confessions, who could blame her? Memory is proverbially treacherous, and why not hers with others? She was pleasant; that was the primary fact to be dealt with; the secondary was, that she laid herself out to charm the women quite as well as the men. Which was amiable; seeing that the men so openly adored her and that the women admired her only by exceptions. Hitherto the gentlemen had devoted themselves to Mrs. Dundas on those occasions when she appeared among them, partly because she was handsome and partly because their wives were afraid of her; but now Madame la Marquise was the local queen and the Andalusian was deposed. Juno, splendid, but stupid and a termagant, was nowhere when Venus, gracious, soft and subtle, took the reins in her hand and drove her chariot to the winning post; which did not tend to make Juno more pleasant to her rival.

Then Madame broke the dull uniformity of North Astonianism so delightfully! She gave charming and informal *réunions* which kept everyone alive; so charming and informal as not to seem out of place with her fresh crape and widow's cap; and to which even Mrs. Harrowby, also in her weeds, went with the rest. This too counted in her favour; for she substituted elegance for expense, and so did not come into competition with the older inhabitants who had placed their faith in profusion. Her age as she allowed it was twenty-three; and in some lights she looked less, if in others considerably more. This was natural, as she must have begun life early to carry all her experiences fitly. She sometimes made her hearers look at each other when her stories were fuller than usual of chronological marvel; but she generally contrived to clamp her anecdote with some unanswerable fact and to soften down its more startling lines, so that she sailed out of the strait with flying colours and left her audience only the wrack of an abortive suspicion.

"She certainly does tell the most extraordinary stories of places and people that she has seen and known!" Mrs. Harrowby used to say to her daughters. "One wonders who she can be herself, to have met with all these great people. We cannot say she tells untruths, because we know nothing about her one way or the other; still I for one do not believe her, and I do not wish you, my dears, to be too intimate with her or to rely too much on her veracity. Girls like you cannot be too particular!"

In spite of which warning, Josephine, good-natured and affectionate

* Josephine, her brother Edgar's favourite and never weary of talking of him, was often at Lionnet. Madame had subjugated her as she had subjugated the rector and her landlord. The dedication of the baby had touched her yearning heart; and was not Sebastian Dundas, the object of her innocent devotion, daily at Lionnet, in his quality of landlord ministering to the needs of a valued tenant?

A man of misleading imagination and irritable nerves, whose fancy runs on excitement and whose temper demands quiet, Mr. Dundas was one of those men whose life is always at odds with their desires. What satisfies the one part starves the other, and that which is starved is always that which is most imperative and most important. Before he married he had lost his soul in reveries on "burning orbs" and "beautiful tigresses;" after he married he thought that the dullest and most prosaic hen-wife, whose poetry translated itself in pickles and preserves, and whose heroism was the heroism of a patient, plodding, domestic drudge, would have been infinitely more his ideal than this superb creature of fire and torment, beauty and disgust. Glorious eyes and peach-like skin, the supple grace of a leopard and the exciting nature of a tigress, fantastic dress and unusual ornament, are all very well in the early days and before familiarity has led to satiety. In time, meals served with punctuality and composed of food fit for a Christian gentleman's digestion; days passed in peace and the handy articles of furniture lying about not converted into missiles sent flying at your head; nights given to sleep and free from raving hysterics and small white teeth gnawing at your arms like a wild beast at a bone; language purged of epithets of more force than delicacy—in time all these are more to the purpose of rational life than love at high pressure and admiration at white heat. And so Mr. Dundas found to his cost, when his dream of Spanish romance faded and he woke to the pitiless daylight of a wrecked and wretched English home.

But for the not very elevated feeling that he should leave Pepita triumphant, and be her victim to the end, he would probably have put a bullet through his head years ago. Had he had a drop of Southern blood in him he would have put one through hers.

The suavity and repose of Madame de Montfort acted then like balm, like sleep, on his irritable nerves. He seemed to grow young again in her society, to be re-cast into something like his old self before domestic suffering had made him peevish and selfish. She drew him magnetically, and calmed him into a state that looked almost like patience, and that was not far from forbearance; of which Pepita had the benefit—as the wives of men made happy out of the home not infrequently find. All time seemed to be lost that was not passed with Madame. And, as her landlord, he took care that the greater part of it should be passed with her.

Though the rector, who regarded Madame as his spiritual ewe-lamb, did not like Sebastian's frequent presence at Lionnet, he had no stable ground for remonstrance. Madame, tranquil and unruffled, was so

superior to vulgar suspicion, to self-condemnatory fear, it would be ungentlemanlike to even hint at caution or displeasure; and the rector prided himself on his gentlehood quite as much as on his sound theology. Perhaps more. Besides, how can you insinuate precautions against doubtful behaviour to a widow with her weeds still fresh, and the name of her dear husband for ever on her lips? It was an insult he could not offer her, even though he never paid a pastoral visit to Lionnet, which was pretty nearly every day, without finding Mr. Dundas installed there before him, or seeing him arrive almost immediately after. Sebastian had however, always good reasons for coming. Now it was to assist Madame to plan out a new flower-bed, and now to mount her water-colours which she said were done, some by herself and some by her husband.

By-the-by their work was marvellously alike, and there was an odd confusion of signatures; for, if V. de M. stood in one corner, something else was sure to be discernible underneath, and the J. de M., which represented Joseph de Montfort, the late Marquis, was written in Madame's handwriting, as perhaps was natural. No one but Mr. Dundas saw this; but he kept his counsel so loyally that even she never knew he had discovered the little discrepancy.

Nevertheless, though there was, as we have seen, always a good reason for his being there, and though Madame never showed the slightest embarrassment when he came, but received him in the most natural manner in the world and made it appear how his coming was to be accounted for, Mr. Birkett wished that he could give her a hint, or that Sebastian had more consideration. Madame de Montfort was but a young woman yet for all her *savoir faire*, and it would be a thousand pities if, in the innocence of her heart, she laid herself open to ill-natured gossip. Besides, Mrs. Dundas was such a dreadful creature! There was no knowing what fearful scandal might not arise if she took it into her head to be jealous, and to make a scene.

It quite fretted the rector. Was she not his charge? and were not he and Mrs. Birkett specially responsible for her? To be sure, Josephine Harrowby was often at Lionnet; but somehow this carried no comfort to Mr. Birkett. On the contrary, the idea of "those two women hanging about Dundas," or sometimes, "that conceited fellow of a Dundas making a fool of himself with those two women," when he had left him master of the situation, as he was occasionally obliged to do, was intensely distasteful to him. But he kept his counsel, as Mr. Dundas had kept his; and not even to the wife of his bosom expressed his opinion that Madame la Marquise de Montfort allowed Sebastian to visit her too often, and that mischief would come of it if she was not careful.

Thus, three gentlemen of the place silently agreed to suppress facts which might have aroused suspicion if told, and so far made themselves the unconfessed tools of the clever comedian now playing her part among them. It was one of the things which men do for women

when, if crafty, they are also clever—the women who, while they deceive, take care to amuse, while they use are solicitous to flatter. The honest, who neither deceive nor flatter, seldom come off so well.

CHAPTER VII.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

MRS. DUNDAS had not yet called personally on Madame. More than once her husband had left her card, accompanied by some well-sounding word of apology which Madame had taken in good part, and as if she believed it; though she knew quite well that, after the first, each successive card had been surreptitiously abstracted from Pepita's flagree-silver case; and that the apology was a coinage of Mr. Dundas's own brain. She had been very gracious and amiable about it all; and had waived the ordinary ceremonial in the Spaniard's favour—going to call on her first—with that frank sinking of small things which is the prerogative of the superior person.

But after this introductory visit, when Pepita had felt constrained somehow to behave with unwonted decency, Madame had not shown herself at Andalusia Cottage again. It was too much like venturing into the den of a wild beast to be an agreeable pastime; and though she had come out safe from the initial encounter, she did not care to try conclusions a second time.

So here too things stood in that state of armed neutrality which means secret war: Madame la Marquise knowing that Mrs. Dundas suspected her of abstract evil to any extent, and not disinclined to supply her with concrete reasons in one direction; and Mrs. Dundas knowing that Madame disliked her, and having no desire that it should be otherwise.

One day however, Mrs. Dundas, taking no counsel with her husband, set out to Lionnet, carrying Leam with her. Leam was now about fourteen; a tall, slender, brown girl, with a quantity of dark hair—not jet-black like her mother's, but with some of the father's gold on the edges when the sun shone across it—framing her sad face and drawn as a coronet above her melancholy brow; with large pathetic eyes, and a fixed, sad mouth that neither smiled nor quivered, but that was always set to one expression of tragic immobility. It was a face promising exquisite melodies of thought and feeling, eloquent of capacity for suffering and intensity of love; but as yet the reality fulfilled nothing of the promise. Those large, long-fringed, mournful eyes were like glorious gates leading to an empty chamber. The soul that seemed to look through them was only the shadow, the potentiality, not the thing itself. Sorrow she never knew, because she never knew joy; thought was a thing as yet unborn in her unawakened brain; she saw without understanding, lived without learning, and the beginning and end of her

capacity for love was her mother. But here her love was intense—so intense that it touched on the borders of heroism—and was in itself a poem. Life had no other object for her, the universe held no other centre than that beloved mother; those flowers only were beautiful which her mother praised, those beings only sacred which her mother cherished; she cared for no glory in the starry sky, no loveliness on the green earth, no thought of the soul of man, no knowledge, no desire, which her mother passed by and disdained; no sage could have instructed her, no angel could have guided her, had her mother derided the learning of the one, the wisdom of the other; and when she thought of God she thought only of her mother—as a man.

The passion of race, too, bound her with a tie even stricter than natural instinct; and nothing angered Leam so much as to call her English, and like her father; as nothing brightened her to such near resemblance to pleasure as to say she was her mother's miniature and a Spaniard of the true blood.

Living between two parents who were confessed enemies, she had chosen her side; and this with no half-heartedness, no halting of the will. She loved the one, partly with the blindness of instinct, partly with the pride of likeness, in some degree with the sense of dependence, in some with the sense of mutual isolation, and with a certain compelling sentiment of fear dominating all. But it was a fear that only drew her closer; for if the mother's violence was extreme, so was her love; if she struck, she caressed—and children pass by the violence as a mere adjunct if they get the love as the substance. This was how she felt for the one; for the other she had the disdainful kind of hatred it was but natural she should feel, accustomed as she had been from her earliest infancy to play with a flaxen-wigged doll, dressed in scarlet and black, with horns, hoofs and a tail, and called "El señor papa!" How should she not hate him? He was her mother's oppressor, had light hair and blue eyes, was a Protestant and an Englishman; how then should she, a Spaniard and her mother's daughter, love him? The thing was out of nature, and Leam did not try to compass the impossible.

Densely ignorant of all that it would have been good for her to know, Leam had learnt only two things to perfection: to keep silence and her own counsel. Silent and cautious, as one living in an enemy's camp and with a sacred cause to defend, she was at the same time destitute of conscience and without a fragment of moral sense other than might be contained in her passionate fidelity to her mother. The words right and wrong were words having no meaning for her; and she knew no barrier, save material impossibility, between herself and her desires.

If she had no morality, neither had she any religious or spiritual life. Her cardinal point of religion, as Pepita had taught it, was to despise the English church as heretical, and to hold that its doctrines, whatever they were, had been first taught by the great archfiend himself. Her mother told her so; and of course if her mother said so, it was true. She

had an idea that English people believed in nothing—neither in God nor the devil, neither in the saints nor in heaven. Her mother used always to say that Protestants were pigs, good only to be roasted by slow fires, and that she wished the Holy Inquisition was established once again, that these heretic dogs might be burnt with their sins. As for the priesthood of Mr. Birkett, or of married clergy in general, Pepita best expressed her ideas thereon when she one day took the cat, tied round its neck a pair of paper bands, and a black rag made to do duty for the Geneva gown; then hung it up by the neck, crying; “Preach, Birkett, preach! The one is as good as the other!”

She hung the poor cat till it died: but Pepita was an Andalusian, with none of that false sentimentality which makes men pitiful to beasts. She only laughed as she kicked the still quivering body aside, and said savagely; “I wish it had been the man-dog instead; a priest with a wife—pah! he should be burnt!”

She had thus destroyed all possible reverence in her little daughter for the faith of the world in which she lived; but she had substituted no other of any value. She had taught the child to say her Ave and Pater-noster and to tell her beads, to cross herself, to believe in the Holy Mother more than in God and in the saints before the Mother. But she had taught her to except Saint Sebastian, who had once been Pepita's patron saint and favourite, and to call him cheat and rogue loudly, so that he should hear. Had he not led her to her ruin by the living lie of his likeness? Pepita used to say. Her patron saint indeed! What was he about to let Sebastian Dundas befool her as he had done! He was stupid, wicked, of no account; so he was deposed with contumely, and Leam was careful to vilify him daily as her mother's enemy.

But if he had failed, there were others who were good—saints who would restore her lost toys, make the sun shine when she wanted it to be fine, and work small miracles in her favour when properly entreated; and to these Leam was used to pray when she wanted their help. All the same she might rate them roundly if they neglected her.

This was the sum of the child's religious faith and practice. It was not much, taken in a vital sense; but how can ignorance give knowledge? It was fetishism of the grossest kind; but what else could Pepita formulate, fetish-worshipper as she was?

Here, then, we have her, Leam, as she was at fourteen; a mere bit of brute material, potential, not active; a soul unborn; heart untouched, save by one affection; a spirit imprisoned; an intellect unawakened; a vitalised machine made after the pattern of humanity, but as yet only a machine; an elemental chord whence would be evolved rich and lovely harmonies or strong and jarring discords, who could say which?—volcanic forces for the present batted down and with the surface smoothness unrent and undisturbed.

For the rest, she was shy and taciturn; speaking English with a certain hesitancy that rendered her yet more silent; not so strictly beautiful at

this present time, for she was meagre and undeveloped, as promising to become so when more fully matured. And then she promised to develop a loveliness as superb as her mother's and more refined, less animal and more thoughtful, less passionate and more intense.

Silent, impassive, ignorant, her heart closed against every one but her mother, and held by that mother in almost oriental seclusion, no one in North Aston could be said to know Leam Dundas. She had never mingled with the other children, after the manner of country families living side by side; and on those rare occasions when Mr. Dundas, for contradiction, had insisted on her going to their games and fêtes, she had sat apart silent and motionless, refusing to join in their games, not laughing, not speaking, not moving—a dark-eyed, melancholy little statue too proud to cry and too shy to thaw. The children all dreaded her, and she dreaded them. Hence there had never been any cordiality between her and them; and, as has been said, no one knew her, and she was never seen beyond the garden and rarely within it.

Madame de Montfort had been two months at Lionnet and had not seen Leam until to-day. This bright and burning day of June however, Pepita and Leam in their lace mantillas, with high combs and ribbon rosettes in their hair—blood-red for the one, blue and white, Our Lady's colours, for the other—and carrying fans as if they were at home in Andalusia, came like creatures out of a Spanish chorus at the opera and presented themselves suddenly at Lionnet; where they found Mr. Dundas as his wife expected to find him.

Hot and cruel as one of her own sandy deserts, and jealous as the traditional Spaniard should be, Pepita had no idea of letting others take pleasure in her rejected property. She would have refused her cast-away crusts to a starving woman if the fancy had so taken her, and she carried out the principle with her husband. She did not trouble herself much about the doings of the Misses Harrowby at the Hill; though here too she would sometimes descend like a tornado and scatter the harmless interests got up by the spinsters with their old friend, as a storm scatters the treasures of little shrines in undefended places. But for the most part she despised them too much to interfere with them; "white mice" she called them with the Spanish gesture of contempt, when she baptised them as nothing worse. Neither was she jealous of the Limes' girls, pretty—curly-headed Carry Fairbairn and that roguish Susy, both of whom everybody liked, and who paid back their popularity in a general coinage of good-nature as heartsome as kissing and the same to every one; and as to Adelaide Birkett, she knew her sentimental spouse too well to fear his making any ideal out of her straw-coloured hair and china-blue eyes! But Madame la Marquise de Montfort was a woman of another kind; her influence was altogether different; and stupid as Pepita was in somethings, she was clever enough to recognise here her mistress and her rival.

For which cause she set out this sultry sunny day of June to pay, her

long-standing social debt, and to make Madame over and above a free gift of some part of that doubtful thing she called her mind.

Madame was sitting in the drawing-room as Mrs. Dundas and Leam came in. She was trimming a baby's frock—a safe and sacred kind of employment which neutralised the cosy familiarity of her companionship. For Mr. Dundas was in the conservatory leading out from the drawing-room, pottering among the flowers as if he was at home. He was talking gaily to Madame while she pinched up bows and he stuck in labels; his work to-day having been to write botanical names on white painted labels, and to distribute the same correctly. It gave a scientific air to her horticulture, which was what Madame liked; and it suited her to appropriate another person's knowledge.

“I am glad to see you, Mrs. Dundas,” said Madame, meeting her guest in her usual charming manner—graceful, sweet, friendly, but not familiar; always with that slight air of well-bred condescension which expresses the sense of superiority, but refuses to profit by it, characteristic of true nobility.

It was an awkward moment for Mr. Dundas, looking so much at home among the flower-pots. He had to pretend that he was not afraid of his wife and to conceal that he was; also to prevent, if he could, the outbreak he felt sure would come. But if he was a little unequal to the occasion, and could scarcely rise to the height of his responsibilities, Madame was strong enough for all exigencies, and without apparent strain.

Taking no heed of Pepita's furious face when she saw her husband—where she expected to see him—Madame, with the placid air, smooth voice, and perfect self-possession which were her characteristics, began to talk to her guest about her garden, the flowers she had planted and the flowers she was going to plant, and how deeply indebted she was to Mr. Dundas for his timely visit to-day, when she had come to the end of her small store of knowledge and he had so kindly supplied her with a few names.

“I am so passionately fond of flowers,” she went on to say in that easy uninterrupted flow of talk which was like the run of a river, and almost as impossible to check when she had a purpose in going on. “I do what I can, you see here, but at the best I have nothing like yours in your lovely country:”—with a smile that credited Mrs. Dundas with all the beauty of Spain, flowers, customs, costumes, all. “When I lived at the court at Aranjuez, in the service of her Royal Majesty, we ladies had a parterre for ourselves, planted with the loveliest flowers in the world. You know the pomegranate, of course, Señora, and the oleander? The parterre was full of pomegranates and oleanders, with oranges and myrtles, and lots of other things I do not remember. The Queen used to walk with us there for hours in the cool of the evening.”

Here she stopped and, with the look of one lost in retrospective thought, pinned a bow on the baby's frock.

"Were you at our Court?" asked Pepita almost solemnly, her big eyes fixed with an odd kind of reverence on this soft-voiced ubiquity.

"It was my second home!" said Madame gently.

And there was so much of truth in her romance, in that she had begun life as a nurse-maid to an English family living in Madrid, and had passed thence to a similar post in the family of a court lady at Aranjuez—where she had met her first fate.

"Then you are not a pig of a Protestant, but a good Catholic like me!" cried Pepita, ready to forgive and believe every thing now.

"I never talk on religious subjects," said Madame gravely; "there is no use in it, and it only makes bad blood."

"You lived at our Court at Aranjuez?" repeated Pepita.

The very words seemed to soften the fibres of her angry heart. Madame, if not the rose, had been so near to it as to carry about her the sacred perfume. If not herself royal she had consorted with royalty,—and Spanish royalty—the only true thing, the only real blue blood of them all;—none of your make-believes, like this wretched little Court of England, buried among the Scottish mountains and consorting mainly with gillies and gamekeepers; but home royalty, the only throne to be called a throne in the world!

Madame smiled, and then she sighed. "I met my husband there," she said. "He had Spanish blood in him."

"You had not told me that," said Mr. Dundas jealously.

He hated Spaniards as much as Pepita hated the English, and he wished this charming creature had not been so far defiled.

"No," answered Madame quite tranquilly; "I have not had an opportunity, I suppose. I do not often speak of myself in general society; and I never see you alone."

"Can you talk Spanish?" asked Pepita in *patois*.

Madame shook her head.

"I have forgotten my Castilian," she said; and then went off into a vivid description of Andalusia, cleverly got up from Murray, in which she mentioned by chance—and this was pure chance—the district where Pepita had lived.

It was the crowning stroke of fascination.

"Did you see my father's house?" she cried.

Madame might keep that worthless Sebastian of hers to label her flowers and frame water-colours, as long as she liked now, if only she would talk to her of Spain and tell her about El Corte and the bull-fights, and her father's house too! Poor Pepita! she often lived back in the glad old turbulent days of her youth, and wondered what had become of big brown José, of swarthy Juan, of fierce Martin, of lithe young daring Pepe. How they all loved her! and she!—ah! she would have been happier with any one of them, though only muleteers for their living and brigands on the off days, if it had not been for that false Saint Sebastian who had sent a pretended hidalgo to bewilder her with

his promises, and draw her down to evil and misfortune at this accursed place!

Madame watched the splendid face in its softening dream.

"I daresay I did see your father's house," she said. "I knew almost all the noblemen and gentlemen in the place. Which was your father's?"

Before Pepita could answer, Mr. Dundas said harshly, in Spanish: "Hold your tongue, woman! do you want all the world to know from what robber's hovel I took you to be an English gentleman's wife?"

On which Pepita turned round on him, and presented him with that piece of her mind which she had spared Madame de Montfort—Leam sitting by.

Unfortunately for the child this was no unusual experience, and she was neither surprised by, nor did she take part in, these animated parental dialogues. She only hated her father in her heart more and more for the harsh things which he said to her mother, while she thought that mother's passion to him the most natural and justifiable thing in the world.

Madame, feigning to believe that the dead-white face of the husband, as he said a few words in a low, hissing voice, in answer to the torrent poured out by the wife—shouting, gesticulating, aflame—meant nothing but the friendliest intercourse, said, turning to Leam to whom she had not spoken before:

"I suppose you understand Spanish, Miss Dundas? How I envy you! I am so sorry I have forgotten mine! I really think I must take it up again, and then I can join in the conversation."

Leam made no answer. She did not see that one was wanted, and she was constitutionally chary of her words. She simply raised her large eyes to Madame, and looked at her mournfully, as if some unutterable tragedy was connected with the fact of speaking Spanish like a native; and then she looked at her mother for assistance.

It was Mr. Dundas however, who, turning that dead-white face of his from his wife to Madame, answered for his daughter.

"It is scarcely worth while to give yourself much trouble for that, Madame," he said bitterly. "I do not think you would be greatly edified by joining in any conversation between Mrs. Dundas and myself."

"No?" she answered smoothly. "You must allow me to be the best judge of that."

The visit soon came to an end after this. As she rose to go, Pepita said, in her broken English; "We must have a talk together, Señora, you and I, when my husband there" (with a contemptuous jerk of her hand) "is making fools of those white mice Harrowbys. I must hear of my beautiful Spain. It will do me good! You are the only person I have seen, since I came to this place of perdition, who has been there. Pigs! they don't know the only place worth knowing! And you have seen our Queen! Oh yes; we must speak together!"

"Yes, we will talk of it;" said Madame de Montfort quietly, her

calm face and civil voice contrasting so strangely with the fierce excitement of Pepita. "I will gladly tell you all I can remember; and I hope I shall have the pleasure of welcoming you here again soon. Thank heaven that is over!" she thought, as Mrs. Dundas and her daughter left the room: Pepita calling to her husband, in Spanish; "Dog of an Englishman, you are not wanted, else I would drag you out with me by your beard of straw!"—"I would as soon see a wild beast in my room as that awful woman. What a horror! what a monster! And that girl!—a mere large-eyed idiot, without two ideas in her head—she looked as if she was imbecile, and I believe she is. Pah!"

To Mr. Dundas, aloud, she said sweetly; "What a superb face la señora has, and la señorita too! And the exquisite beauty of their dress! What a mistake we English make in our fashions! How far more beautiful the Spanish costume!"

"I detest it!" said Mr. Dundas sharply; and Madame changed the conversation.

While going home Pepita was extraordinarily excited. She spoke in a loud, strident voice that made the labourers in the fields and the passing carters look at her curiously. They had never got quite used to her heathenish headgear, and thought her mad without a doubt. To-day they thought her madder than ever, and the haymakers and the weedeers looked one to the other as "Madam Dundas," as they called her, drove by; and some said compassionately; "Mr. Dundas he be main holden with such a missis;" while others, sterner in their perception of retributive justice, answered back; "He be well served. What call had he to tie hisself up to a heathen like that there?"

"Leama," cried Pepita in Spanish—mother and daughter never talked together in any other language—"I hate that woman; but she masters me when I am with her. You must hate her too, little Leama, and not let her master you."

"I do if you do, mamma," answered Leam.

"But I was glad to hear of the old home," continued Pepita. "Ah! little one, when you are old enough to have money of your own, we will go to my beloved Andalusia, and live there together, under the grapes and the olives with the saints and good Christians! We will leave this accursed place, and that brigand, your father, and we will go where men know how to live and love."

"Yes, mamma, I should like that too," said Leam.

"Yes, you would like it, little one. The dances to the snapping castanets, and the bull-fights! Holy Virgin! it is fine to see the men and bulls! Good bulls, brave bulls, with their man a-piece killed, and the horses made into mincemeat! You must like that, little Leama, else you are no true daughter of Andalusia, no child of Spain! It will be fine to see you at your first. It is better than the first communion, and something like it. A little pale, and holding tight to my dress, because you are only a young thing and not accustomed, and then your heart

beating as if your lover was under your window! Would that we were there, away from this English hole of mud, and that traitor, your father! Tell me, Leama, that you love me, little one, and hate him as much as I do."

"I love you, mamma, and only you, and what you hate I hate," answered Leam, her eyes kindling. "I am an Andalusian too."

"Good child! good Leama! never forget that. Hate goes farther than love. All good Spaniards know how to hate. Only fools love," said Pepita scornfully.

"Except you to me, and me to you, mamma," said Leam, taking her hand and kissing it—that small, fat, dimpled hand with the taper fingers and pink nails, one of the most beautiful things in the world to Leam.

"Yes, yes; that is different. Mothers and daughters love each other. Holy Virgin! who should, if they do not! But that is another matter."

"And some fathers and daughters too, mamma?" said Leam interrogatively.

Her mother gave an angry scream that startled the sheep in the fields and the birds in the bushes.

"No, no! not fathers and daughters!" she cried, crossing herself against the evil omen of such a thought. "My father beat me, and I hated him as much as I hate yours. No; fathers and husbands are tyrants, only mothers and lovers are good. Husbands are wretches. If I had a good Andalusian by me now, mine should learn something of the things of Spain he little dreams of. When you have lovers, little Leama, I will tell you all, and how you are to manage. You must lead them a dance through the wood, and leave them there. Never let yourself love, but hold them at your feet. When they come I will teach you; but if you let yourself love, I will kill you."

"I shall never love, mamma," said Leam shuddering. "I am afraid of men. I will never leave you. You are different from anyone else to me. It is another world to be with you."

"Because I have the sun in my blood," said Pepita, striking her hand on her arms. "I am not like these washed-out rags, these damp hens of Englishwomen. Nor are you, my little Leama! The saints be praised, you have your mother's eyes and your mother's heart. I could make you kill if I wanted you to kill; and some day I shall!"

Leam was silent. Not because she was shocked at her mother's words, but because she was frightened at her manner. She was always afraid to see her so excited as she was to-day. It made her look so strange, with her nostrils so red and distended and her eyes with that burning light behind them! And as often as not these furious moods ended in some fierce outbreak against Leam herself whom her mother would beat into cruel bruises. Once she made her teeth meet in the child's lean brown arm. She carried the mark yet, and would always.

To-day however, nothing of this happened; but for all the evening Pepita was restless and excited, repeating to herself; "A friend of my Queen, at my court, in my country!" adding once; "I ought to love her for this; but she conquers me when I am with her, and I hate her when I am away from her."

Meanwhile Mr. Dundas, still sitting with Madame, expressed his interest in her travels, and his wish to know all about her courtly residence in Spain.

"Willingly," she answered; and began, in the most natural way in the world, something about the Queen and Aranjuez, Madrid and the Escorial; but before Mr. Dundas had fully seized the meaning of what she said—for it was all put rather hazily—she had glided off into another track, and Spain was left behind like a dissolving view.

After this Madame studied the map and the Handbook yet more diligently, and made herself mistress of sundry details that carried weight. But she pronounced the words oddly for one who had lived at court, and spoke of Saint Jago and Don Quixote de la Mancha as if these were English names, and the letters composing them had the same sound and value in Castilian as they have in good Cockney English.

CHAPTER VIII.

ONLY FRANK!

"MADAME!" cried Josephine, rushing into Madame de Montfort's, early one afternoon, in a state of brilliant excitement. "We have such good news from my brother!"

"Yes?" said Madame, turning from white to red and then to white again, her face disturbed as Josephine had never seen it disturbed before. "You startled me," she added with a forced smile by way of explanation.

"I am so sorry, but I wanted to tell you—my brother is coming home," Josephine exclaimed, not connecting her friend's embarrassment with herself or her news.

Madame put her hand to her side.

"Indeed!" she said faintly. "From India?"

"No, not Edgar—it is Frank who is coming down from London. He is coming next week—is not that delightful!" answered Josephine still radiant and excited. "I wish it had been my darling Edgar!" more soberly.

"Oh," said Madame drawing a deep breath, relieved yet disappointed. "Only Frank!"

Josephine looked puzzled. "Yes, only Frank," she repeated. "But why 'only,' dear Madame? Edgar is the eldest and my favourite, but Frank is Frank all the same, and a dear boy—such a nice fellow when you get to know him and don't mind his little affectations!"

She laughed pleasantly. Even his "little affectations" were not real blemishes to her affectionate eyes.

"Yes," said Madame, who had recovered herself by now; "as you say, Frank is Frank; but he is in London, which is next door as it were, and could come down at any hour; while your brother Edgar is so far away that his return home would be a family jubilee indeed. More than a family jubilee!" she added with her sweet graciousness of manner, including herself and all the world in the Hill future of rejoicing.

"Still, wanting Edgar, Frank is delightful!" said Josephine, sticking to her point.

"Surely! so tell us all about it," answered Madame, drawing a low chair close to her own, for her guest, and making up her face to a listening receptive expression.

It was not the first time that Josephine had amused her new friend and made talk between them, by telling her of these two brothers of hers whom she so frankly idolised. If she liked going to Lionnet for her own purposes, Madame liked as much to have her. She was never tired of hearing all about "the boys," as Josephine called them. Which showed what a sweet and comprehensive character she had, and how she was able to take that true sisterly interest in her friends' loves and feelings, even when quite apart from her own life, which is so sadly wanting in the mass of mankind!

She had heard all about Edgar by now, where he was, what he thought of doing, when he was expected home and the like. She could never get to the bottom of the mystery why he had gone away so suddenly when his place was manifestly at home after his father's death; but once, when Josephine had exhausted her small stock of conjectures, Madame had looked up meekly from the baby on her lap, and had said in a questioning voice, as her contribution to the possibilities of the case:—

"Do you think he had any attachment in London when he spent the winter there, as you say, a year and a half ago? He might have fallen in love and got into trouble somehow; perhaps been refused; perhaps—but that does not seem very likely—been jilted?"

To which Josephine had answered earnestly—

"Oh! I am sure there was nothing of the kind! We should have heard of it if there had been. Frank would have heard of it, he knew all Edgar's life; and he would have told us. No, I am sure there was no love affair!"

"That is conclusive, and shuts my poor little avenue at once," then had said Madame with her placid smile. "But it only makes the mystery still more mysterious."

"And yet if there had been a love affair, and we had never heard of it, what a dreadful thing that would have been!" innocent Josephine had cried; and Madame had closed the conversation by saying demurely, "Yes, dreadful indeed!"

"And when is your brother Frank, as you call him, coming down?"

asked Madame, going back to the initial circumstance of the conversation, after they had described Edgar and his present position and future prospects, his temper and his habits, when he was likely to return, and whom he was likely to marry—Josephine, with feminine treachery, on the point of saying to this last clause; “I know who would like to marry him, Adelaide Birkett,”—but refraining for the present moment, though she knew in her own heart it would come out some day.

“Next Monday,” answered Josephine.

“Will he stay long?” Madame inquired.

“We hope so; very likely he will be here for a month or six weeks.”

Madame was silent a few minutes.

“And how do you propose to amuse him?” she then said, keeping her eyes down. “Gentlemen need so much amusing!”

“By a thousand pleasant ways!” laughed the girl. “We will have a picnic to Dunaston Castle, and some girls to stay with us, and croquet parties, and,” affectionately, “bring him to see you.”

“Perhaps that would not amuse him,” said Madame. “It might be a nuisance instead!”

But Josephine cried warmly; “No! no! no! it will be a delight—how can you doubt it!”

And as a further testimony to her assurance, she got up and kissed the smooth fair face that had the most invincible dislike to be kissed. A sallow complexion stippled up to harmonise with dark hair, artificially bleached and bronzed, has naturally this invincible dislike to be kissed.

But Madame was obliged to submit every now and then to the girl's embarrassing affectionateness, trusting to have time to repair the damaged tract before other callers should arrive. Being of the kind which balances all things in this life as so much to the good and so much to the bad, keeping a debtor and creditor account with annoyance and advantage, she took these unwelcome caresses as the tax she had to pay for the friendship of a Harrowby girl; which certainly counted for something to her good in the place.

Time went on, and the days and nights flowed silently together. The family at the Hill were pleasantly excited, and Carry Fairbairn was prettier than ever because happier and more heartsome than ever. Madame was troubled; and yet she did the best to give herself courage, often saying to herself; “I have seen him only once, and then my hair was dark. He cannot recognise me as I am.”

Still the trouble continued and the courage was at the most an attempt. So things went until the day when Frank arrived; Frank, the handsome, vain, affected young barrister, who thought his success in life depended more on his person and his manners than on his law and industry, coming down to his country relations as an act of condescension for which he expected to be paid, part in flattery and attention, part in a handsome cheque from his mother added to his allowance.

In London to be sure he made as much account of “his place,” as if

it had been Knole or Stoneleigh at the least, and exalted this country household of fairly good middle-class position into more than aristocratic value, placing it on the very apex of the County Families.

When he came down from London he gave himself the airs of court life stooping to rustication, and made his people almost believe that the metropolis was at his feet and that royalty itself went out of its way to do him honour. It was a way he had; but his heart was better than his head; and if he passed for a sort of social Adonis, he was really an honest gentleman underneath his disguise.

This annual visit of Frank's was the great event of the Harrowby year. The mother and sisters kept all their planned excursions, all invitations to pretty girl-guests, all extra festivities, until Frank should come down. And to do the handsome young fellow justice he also did his best to make things go off briskly, and exerted himself to give an extra fillip to the usually rather heavy routine of the home junketings.

This time things went marvellously well. The weather was fine; there were two or three charming girls at the Hill and two or three pleasant men at the Limes. One day they made a picnic to Dunaston Castle; another time they undertook a three days' riding expedition to Grey Knowes, a famous place some forty miles away; Carry Fairbairn and Adelaide Birkett, both pretty girls, were constantly at the Hill, and Frank had never yet found himself overwhelmed with petticoats; but the new arrival, this Madame la Marquise de Montfort, whom the smart young barrister specially wished to see, had from a variety of causes been as yet invisible, and Frank's curiosity had increased in ratio with his disappointments.

Mrs. Harrowby, too, on her side specially wished him to see her. She wanted him to propound from the heights of his London experience who she was and what she was; and more than once said she would feel quite satisfied with her clever son's opinion. If he endorsed this new comer, then she felt sure they were safe; but if he pronounced against her—well, if he pronounced against her, what could she do? Unless she wished to make a division in the society, she must do just what she was doing now—countenance while she distrusted, and recognise under protest.

Nothing amused Frank more than to hear his mother discuss her perplexities; wherein he never helped her. To tease her, he used to say with his most candid air that it was so unlikely an adventuress, or even a person of doubtful antecedents, should come to North Aston where there were no old gentlemen to gull and no young ones to victimise, he was prepared to find Madame all she had represented herself to be—a sorrowing widow, whose means had diminished, burying herself in the country for mingled grief and economy, and casting anchor at North Aston emphatically by a fluke.

But this was only for the sake of contradiction and argument. Having had a tolerably varied experience in London, and being moreover judiciously minded on his own account, he secretly believed that Madame la Marquise

de Montfort would turn out no better than she should be, and that all these dear stupid folks of his were simply more or less taken in by an adventuress.

Still, he could not decide on the matter, for Madame had become strangely invisible of late. Frank Harrowby's arrival had sent her to the upper chambers whence she could command a view of the road, and she rivalled Mrs. Dundas in the cool audacity with which she denied herself while seated concealed behind the curtains. She had been diligent in returning the Harrowby call when she had seen Frank safely on the moorland road, and knew that he could not return for another hour or two ; and she had been sweetly distressed at the misfortune of his perpetual absence—also of her own ; for her dear friend Josephine talked so often of her brothers, she had said with a smile, she seemed almost to know them in one way, and she was really anxious to know them in another. It was so unfortunate, too, that when the rector gave his dinner-party on Frank's arrival, and she was asked and had accepted, she had such a wretched headache she could not possibly go down !

But the Lady of the Hill had set her mind on this meeting, and for once Madame had to acknowledge her master. She could not help herself ; she must go to the Harrowby dinner got up for Frank next week. If she had continual headaches just at this moment, it would look suspicious ; and she must avoid suspicion as carefully as—detection. Had she been in London with a friendly doctor at her elbow, she would probably have had a rather severe attack of measles, but here she was unable to be shunted on such a plea ; and accordingly, when Mrs. Harrowby's note arrived requesting the favour, Madame la Marquise was forced to reply, accepting with pleasure, and forced also to go when the day came.

She was desperately disturbed—it might almost be called terrified—at the thought of this meeting ; but when the time came, she took her courage in her two hands as usual, and threw herself on the good luck which had befriended her so generously until now.

She was very pale when she entered the drawing-room where the whole of the guests had assembled. She had come rather late, purposely. As she had to run the risk, the woman's vanity in her made her desire to run it with the greatest amount of glory ; and she knew that she came into a room gracefully and looked well when in movement.

The faces which met her as she entered seemed like a very sea. Her nervousness had multiplying powers of painful extent, and the fourteen people who turned and looked at this late-coming sinner, for whom they were all waiting and all hungry, seemed to her at the least fifty. But out from the crowd she singled at a glance Frank, standing superbly at the fireplace, watching her entrance.

Her heart stood still. How like he was his elder brother !—and yet slighter, darker, brighter. Edgar was the handsomer man of the two, a bigger-built man, and with a head and face expressive of more thought and may be self-will. Frank was keener, lithier, more mobile, more pre-

tentious; he affected more the airs of a man of fashion and the bearing of a man of the (London) world. If Edgar affected anything, it was rather the bearing of the typical Englishman, despotic and high-handed, knowing better than any one else everything under heaven, absolutely right, despising superstition but down before conventionalism, and though contemptuous of the mind and purposes of women, to be managed by the first clever hussy who chose to lay her finger-tips on his.

After interchanging greetings with those whom she knew, Madame, as white as the lappets of her widow's cap, turning her head in obedience to the voice of her hostess, set herself steadily to her ordeal, raised her eyes and looked full into Frank's face as he bowed and she swept herself and her garments into a graceful curve, at the formal introduction which made them acquainted—for the second time.

He looked at her narrowly, with a puzzled expression in his face; while she, every nerve strung to the utmost, met his eyes with as much of the frank indifference of ignorance as she could assume; but her lips were tightly closed, and the hand which held her fan grasped it like a band of steel. No one, not even Frank, saw this—that smooth outside of hers hid so much, and was so thickly laid!

Dinner was announced almost immediately after this; and Frank, giving Madame his arm, led her out as the First Lady; an odd kind of doubt running very distinctly through his mind as to whether she was entitled to this place or not, and if he was not dishonouring by implication the ladies of known safety and respectability thus assigned to walk in her train.

All through that dinner Frank looked and pondered, haunted with a likeness that escaped him just as he wished to verify it, feeling sure that he had seen her before; but where? when? how? When he asked himself these questions, his memory answered nothing, and the past was a blank. She, equal to her dangers—as indeed was she not always?—talked to her companion in her smooth, pleasant way, but so vaguely as to facts, opinions, people, that Frank felt her conversation to be like her past personality—a kind of impalpable cloud wherein nothing was defined and nothing sure. She was exceedingly careful during this talk—committed herself to nothing, mentioned no names, but referred only to generalisations, as, “friends of mine,” evidently persons of wealth and standing, but not tabulated—until she cast anchor on the Spanish Queen; surely a safe harbourage with any North Astonian! She spoke of her with her usual glib facility, with the respectful familiarity of an intimate; and, to clinch her position, went into the plot—which was really a plot some years ago—when the Queen was to have been taken in her box at the Opera and carried out of the country, and was saved from her fate by the intervention of an Englishman. Madame gave the details fairly enough; she only changed the personality, and made herself the intervening power. But Frank, who was an accurate present-day historian and knew all about the plot in question, looked into her face, and said in

a surprised tone ; " How extraordinary ; one never does know the rights of things. I thought it had been an Englishman who had warned the Queen."

" So it was," answered Madame with calm composure. " But it was me who warned him."

" An unrecorded heroine of unwritten history ? " he laughed ; and she slightly flushed.

" Oh," she said with her noble air, " I do not care to be spoken about. It is enough to do the good, not to have it made public."

" As you have been to Spain, of course you speak Spanish ? " then said Frank, who knew about half-a-dozen words.

" I have forgotten all my Spanish," she answered with a pretty little laugh. " So stupid of me—is it not ? It is from want of practice. I must get it up again—really I must ! "

" Madame speaks French ? " then probed that merciless social surgeon, in pure Parisian, the same to him as his mother-tongue.

Madame smiled in a kind of deprecating way as she shook her head ; answering, with playful reproach ; " Fie ! who does such a rude thing as to speak a foreign language at table ! "

It was the best fence she could have made in the circumstances, but it betrayed her all the same.

Frank smiled, and turned his bright eyes on her keenly. She smiled back an answer suavely, tranquilly, though her heart had sunk like lead.

" Don't you agree with me ? " she asked.

" I accept the rebuke," he answered with mock humility ; " pre-mising however, that your indignation is undeserved, as there is no one here who cannot speak French fluently ; therefore you may, if you like, begin the conversation in that tongue and we will all follow you."

" It is very charming to find such facility," answered Madame graciously. " It reminds me of my friend Madame Espartero. She was the most accomplished woman for languages I ever knew ; so too was my Queen, Isabella."

" Indeed ? " said Frank. " I thought her Most Catholic Majesty had been an intensely ignorant woman."

" Not at all," said Madame. " Ask Mrs. Dundas."

" One savage of another ? " returned Frank. " Xantippe of Mes-salina ? "

Madame smiled. The waters were very deep about her, and she wished fervently she was on dry land, safe with those who loved her, did not care to probe, and who accepted her *quand même*, hazy literature and catholic experience, slips of grammar and incontrovertible assertions of persons, all with the same unquestioning faith.

Nevertheless, as it would not do to show that she was either afraid or distanced, she said quietly ; " Do you like Mrs. Dundas ? " and looked at her across the table.

" Who can like Xantippe ? " said Frank with a shrug.

"Is that her name?" asked Madame.

But she spoke in so matter-of-fact a manner that Frank was left uncertain whether it was covert satire or crass ignorance, and merely laughed back his reply; by which she gained breathing-time, and drove the conversation on to familiar ground—the Park in the season, and last year's Royal Academy. She had remembered some of the leading pictures well; but for a woman who was herself a sufficiently good artist to have painted those water-colours which Mr. Dundas had helped to mount and frame, she showed herself wonderfully ignorant of some popular technicalities. She made some odd blunders too, that were remarkable. In speaking of a picture of "Hercules and Omphale," she ran the former word into two syllables, and the latter she pronounced as if it was Umfle; she made a wild shot about Columbus, and spoke of him as an Englishman—which was queer, taking into account both her American and Spanish experiences; and she confounded Mary Tudor and Mary Stuart in a manner that was, to say the least of it, singular in a person of her station and presumed education. Frank caught her blunders, and led her on. He got her to pity beautiful Mary Stuart for Philip's ill behaviour, and then for his death; to condemn her treatment of her younger sister Elizabeth, and to be not at all astonished that the Queen should avenge the Princess, and cut off her head, with Calais engraven on her heart.

In a word, he gauged her, and he found the measure shallow enough. And all the time poor Madame was vaguely conscious that things were going wrong, though she made heroic efforts to right them; and if she showed her ignorance, showed also her cleverness.

She left on Frank a composite kind of feeling. He distrusted her, and yet he admired her. He felt as if he had seen her before, but her true personality evaded him. She was not an educated woman, but her manners were graceful and her habits those of one accustomed to refined society. She had a subtle tinge of something worse than Bohemianism in her appearance, but nothing could be more modest than her looks and conversation. She was evidently guarding a secret while she seemed to be most candid; and when she was apparently on the point of giving a clue the end broke and the thread was lost. She was a mystery—of that he was certain—whether an evil mystery or one only unfortunate he had no means to discover; still, she was a mystery, and that was more than North Aston wanted.

"Well, Frank, what of Madame de Montfort?" asked the mother, when the evening was over and the family had collected together to discuss how it had gone and the like. "Who is she, my dear?"

"That is hard to say," Frank answered. "Who she is not, is pretty evident; she is not an educated woman, though she is in some things a lady. It seems to me that I have seen her somewhere; but I cannot tell where, and I don't wholly like her looks. There is something *louche* about her; and I would have you all take care of her."

"Oh!" said Josephine, "and she is so nice!"

"So is the vampire-bat, my dear, when it fans you to sleep and sucks your great toe," replied Frank. "Mind, I don't say she is bad, and she may be the widow of the Marquis de Montfort for anything I know; that is a fact easily verified. But widow or no widow, she is queer; and if I can read faces she is both false and artificial."

"I cannot think why you should say so, and on only once seeing her!" remonstrated Josephine.

"But if Frank does say so, he is likely to be correct, with his experience," said Fanny.

"And it is just what we and mamma have always told you, Josephine; but you are so infatuated about this woman!" said Maria.

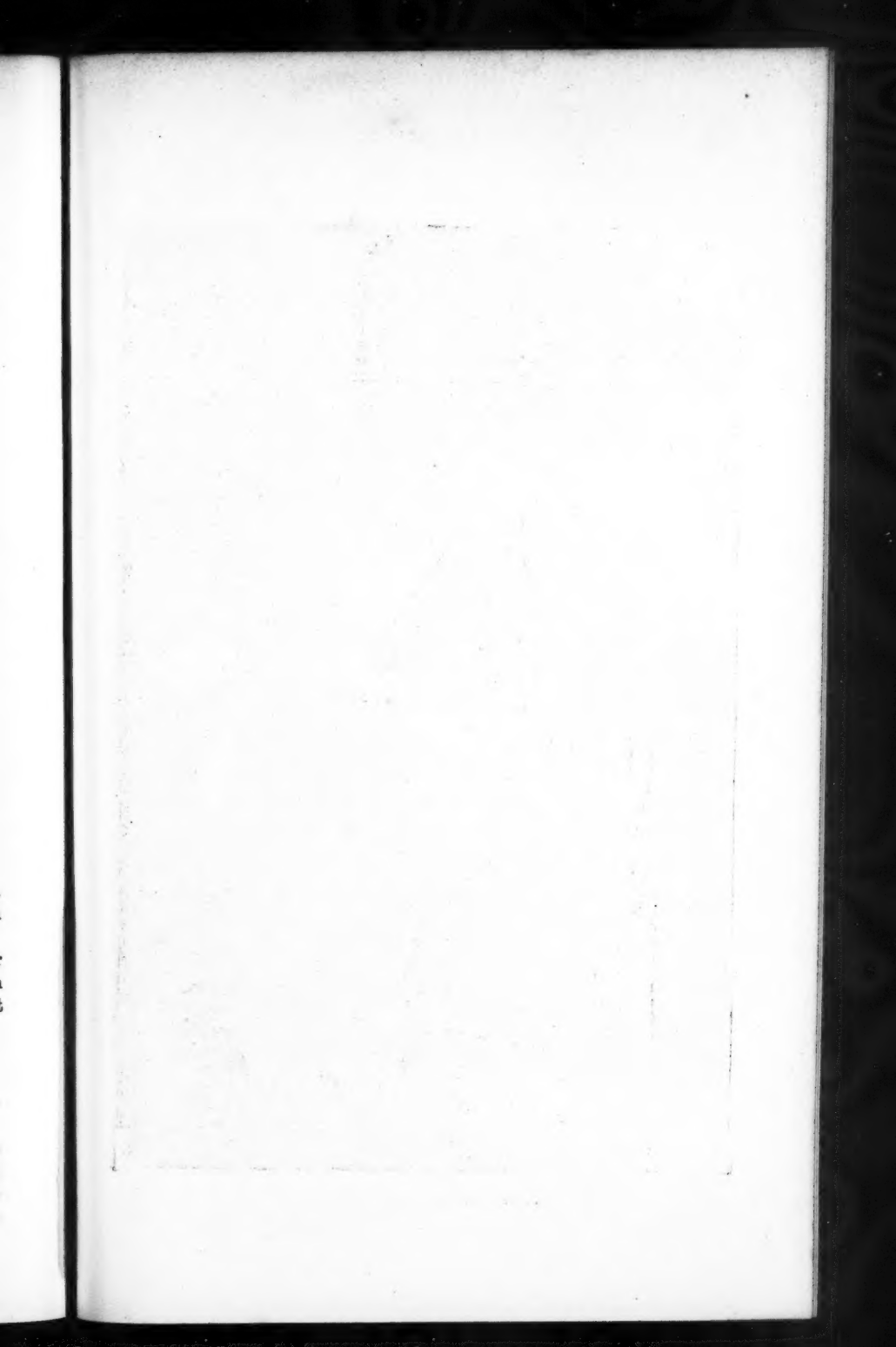
"Then why do you ask her to the house if you think her so bad?" urged Josephine, almost in tears.

Whereat her sisters rebuked her for impertinence, as their manner was.

"No," said Frank, drawing her to him kindly; "she is only logical without knowing it. If we did the absolutely right thing we should decline to receive her here without credentials; but," shrugging his shoulders, "who does the absolutely right thing? And one may be too hard on the poor sinner—if sinner she is—as I should say she was by her looks."

Whence it may be seen that Frank did not add much to the enlightenment of his mother's perplexities, and that he left the question pretty much where he found it. Nevertheless, though he never committed himself to an opinion as to who Madame really was, he stood stoutly to his major proposition that she was queer, also that he doubted and distrusted her; and he always ended by vaguely counselling his people to be wary of her, and careful not to get entangled with her too deeply. This done, he would go off to Lionnet and do a little bit of delving on his own account. But Madame de Montfort was as clever as he; and he merely lost his time when he attempted to dig out from the secret recesses of the fair stranger's past any information she had made up her mind to withhold.

"Which proves she has something to conceal," said Frank, lawyer though he was unmindful of the legal maxim which rules that no man is bound to criminate himself, and that all accused are to be held innocent till proved guilty.





"BENDING HER EAR AGAINST A CREVICE."

